THE

LOTTERY OF LIFE.

VOL. I.

THE

LOTTERY OF LIFE.

BY

THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON

After long stormes and tempests overblowne,
The Sunne at length his joyous face doth cleare:
So when as Fortune all her spight hath showne,
Some blissful hours at last must needes appeare,
Else should afflicted wights ofttimes despeere

SPENSER'S FAERY QUEENE.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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right," observed the two elderly clerks, and they looked graciously at me.

"What! not desire to see Miss Tree, and Kean, or Miss Helen Faucit and Macready? 'Pon my soul! the acting of these great stars quite electrifies me. They are fine creatures."

"What do you think of the acting in the early scenes, Bingly?" asked one of the elderly clerks.

"Think! why very fine, monstrous fine to be sure, but why do you ask?"

"Because, as you only go at the half-price, I thought it likely you may never have seen them."

A laugh on the part of Bingly's imitators followed this remark.

"If I were you, I would for once put together the sums for two admissions of half-price, and see the whole piece, if only just for the novelty of the thing."

"Ha, ha! not so bad, 'pon my soul, not so bad!" and Bingly affected to laugh.

The table being now cleared, I rose to seek my bed-room, for the purpose of arranging my clothes and books, and having placed them in order, and written a letter to my friend Percy Mortimer, I returned to the sitting-room, where

I found the two elderly clerks busily engaged in a game of chess, Mrs. Chatterton knitting, and two of the young men occupied in reading two well-thumbed and soiled novels, from the next circulating library. Mr. Bingly had gone out.

"If you wish to converse, Mr. Wallingford," said Mrs. Chatterton, "I will have great pleasure in a little sociable chat with you; but I must beg of you to speak louder."

A suppressed titter from the young men, marked that they were not so deeply interested in the novels they were perusing, as not to be aware of what was going on in the room.

"You see Mr. Murdoch and Mr. Burton," continued Mrs. Chatterton, "playing chess at the same table, and on the same board where they have played for the last forty years. Night after night there they are, never weary. I wonder they can go on for so many years without being tired of it."

"Well, that's a good 'un, however," said one of the young men, "when here has she been knitting stockings, day after day, and night after night, for nearly as long a period as they have played chess; yet she wonders they can be amused with their game."

"It is wonderful how time flies," resumed Mrs. Chatterton, "and so I often think, when I look over and see Mr. Murdoch and Mr. Burton seated in the same spot, and engaged in the same amusement year after year; and, would you believe it, Mr. Wallingford, it sometimes seems to me as if it was impossible that it could be thirty-five years since I first saw them sitting there, every thing appears so exactly the same,—except that people don't speak so loud? When we always do the same things, and at the same hours, it makes the time pass quite pleasantly, though I can't get Mr. Bingly to think so. Ah, well! he'll come to my opinion when he grows older,—that he will. Doing the same thing at the same hours, keeps people young much longer, I can tell you. Why, I declare, except that Mr. Murdoch has lost all his hair, and his front teeth, and is grown so very corpulent, I don't see much change in him; and, as for Mr. Burton, only that he wears that light-coloured wig, instead of having his head nearly bald, as it was when I first saw him, and his having lost his flesh and got lame, he is just the same man he used to be thirty-five years ago. I, too, am very little changed. Indeed, my friends tell me they don't see the least altera-

tion, which shows what a fine thing it is to be always doing the same thing. Up at six in the summer, and seven in the winter—off to Leadenhall-market thrice a-week in winter, and every day in summer, by eight in the morning; home by nine—breakfast on the table by five minutes after. In the kitchen to look about dinner at ten—see the rooms are perfectly cleaned at half-past ten—scold Kitty. Look over the linen at eleven, repair whatever may require mending. Read the *Morning Post* at twelve, and at one o'clock sit down comfortably to my knitting. At two, Kitty brings me a mouthful of cold meat, a slice of bread, and a glass of beer; and, at half-past two, I take up my knitting again until dinner-time, after which the evening passes just the same as you see. O! it's a great blessing to have the time pass so pleasantly,—is'n't it, Mr. Richard? I dare say you were very sorry to leave your village, because you knew every face and step around the place, and every one knew you? Now, the city of London seems to me to be *my* village. I know every shop, and every owner of a shop, from Mincing-lane to Leadenhall-market—ay, and in the market too, I know most of the folk, and they know me: and you

could not feel more strange in the streets to-morrow, than I should were I to find myself in the village where I was born."

"He's fairly in for it," said one of the young clerks to the other. "I'll be blessed if she aint coming to her visit to her native village: you'll see she'll tell him the whole story."

"He'll never be such a spoony as to sit listening to it," answered the other.

"But you heard nearly the half of it."

"Ay, that was because I was a stranger, and not up to the old girl's long yarns."

"You were a stranger, and she took you in," whispered the other, loud enough to be heard by me, who felt somewhat abashed at finding myself considered as a victim to the garrulous Mrs. Chatterton, although the evident good-nature of the old lady induced me to lend her, what it was plain she received as a compliment, a patient hearing. Tea being now served by the active Kitty, who, with it, brought a supply of buttered muffins, that might have satiated the appetite of a Dando; Mrs. Chatterton busied herself in pouring out the "beverage that cheers, but not inebriates," the steams of which sent up a grateful odour. Even the chess-players left their game, and Messrs.

Thomas and Wilson, their well-thumbed novels, to partake this evening repast; and when I saw the rapidity with which muffin after muffin disappeared, and cup after cup was replenished, I no longer felt surprised at the copious supply provided by the indefatigable Kitty. At half-past ten o'clock, the party retired to their separate chambers, but not before Mrs. Chatterton reminded me, that at five minutes after nine, breakfast would be on the table.

CHAPTER III.

When I awoke the next morning, I was surprised to find, on opening my window, that a dense yellow fog precluded the possibility of seeing any object from it, save a few tall chimnies crowned by lurid-coloured, conical-shaped pots, rising from the mis-shapen roofs of the adjacent houses. Nothing could be more gloomy than the prospect of this "darkness visible," offering a dreary contrast to the wide-stretching domain of Oak Park, with its huge old trees, beneath which the deer loved to nestle, and the sleek cows and snowy fleeced sheep cropped their daily food. The density of the atmosphere impeded the freedom of my respiration, and damped the natural tone of cheerfulness of my mind, but I soon reasoned myself into better spirits; and when I entered the

eating-room, received the matinal greetings of Mrs. Chatterton, with assumed if not real cheerfulness.

"What weather! there never was any thing like it," said Mr. Murdoch.

"So you have said every similar day for the last thirty-five years, and we have had many such days," replied Mr. Burton.

"Would you believe it, I was obliged to pay a link-boy to light me home last night?" observed Mr. Bingly; "and in the theatre, the fog was so thick that one could not see across the house."

"You are finding fault with the butter again, Mr. Bingly," said Mrs. Chatterton; "but it's no use, there is no better to be had at present, I can tell you."

"Not I," answered Mr. Bingly, "I'm tired of finding fault. I really believe the old woman's nose is as blunt to the sense of smelling as her ears are to that of hearing; for if she *could* smell, we should not have such stuff as this," pointing to the pat of butter to which he had helped himself.

Messrs. Thomas and Wilson were too busily occupied in discussing the toast, and washing it down with large cups of tea, to join in the

remarks, rather than conversation, of the other clerks.

At length, the morning meal being concluded, and Mr. Murdoch having looked at his huge silver watch (which resembled a turnip in form and size), he announced that the moment was arrived for entering the office, to which he led the way. The apartment was of considerable dimensions, and along it was ranged a long line of counters, with desks, before which stood high stools, waiting their daily occupants. Mr. Murdoch pointed out the one designed for me, and I seated myself before a huge ledger open on the desk, while that grave functionary explained to me the duties I was expected to discharge. Lamps were lighted through the apartment, but even with the aid supplied by them, it was still gloomy and dingy, the lurid flame casting its dull light over the countenances of the clerks seated at the desks, and on those who kept continually making their entries and exits, as well as on the heaps of golden coin, which the cashier was serving out with a sort of shovel, to meet the demands of the several busy-looking men, who presented checks to him. Every one appeared intent on business; even Bingly seemed to forget the pleasures of half-price

attendance at the theatre; Thomas and Wilson looked as if they never had devoted an evening to a novel; and Murdoch and Burton forgot the fascination of chess, while, with spectacles on nose, they looked over unwieldy books, and made entries in them.

At ten o'clock the partners, or the *firm*, as Mrs. Chatterton loved to designate them, took their station in an inner room, each seated before a desk, and deeply interested in the perusal of the morning papers. Into this sanctum only the privileged customers of the house were admitted; and a tolerably accurate guess of the state of his banking-book might be made, from the coldness or cordiality with which each visitor was greeted, as well as by the politeness, or *brusquerie*, of the individual himself.

Though a novice, I was soon enabled to form a conclusion that the civilest, best dressed, and most gentlemanlike-looking men, were not those who received the most attention from the Messrs. Allison and Finsbury; and that these gentlemen, in turn, were treated with much less politeness by certain plainly dressed, stern-looking men, chiefly of the ages of from fifty to sixty, who walked unceremoniously into the sanctum; excluded the view of the fire from the partners,

by standing with their backs turned to it—and kept their hats on, according to English practice.

The creaking of the ever-opening door, the hum of voices, the frequent coughs, and still more frequent half-suppressed yawns and sneezes, the rattling of money, and the sounds of a multiplicity of pens scratching the paper they were inditing, never ceased for a moment; while, from a distance, came the mingled noises peculiar to the eastern portion of the modern Babylon; all of which produced a sensation of dulness and drowsiness on my spirits, that I felt it difficult to repel.

At five o'clock came the accustomed reprieve, and gladly did I welcome it, though the society assembled in Mrs. Chatterton's room offered little to interest or amuse me. The dinner table presented precisely the same aspect as on the previous day, the only difference being, that a voluminous leg of boiled mutton usurped the place previously assigned to the beef.

Dinner being concluded, I sought the privacy of my chamber, for the purpose of writing to my benefactor, Mr. Mortimer, and also to my father. So great and sudden had been the change in my mode of life within the last forty-

eight hours, that I felt as if weeks, nay months, had elapsed since I had left the country. All was new and strange to me, while the habits of those among whom I found myself thrown, seemed to be as little changed by my presence, as if a new piece of furniture, instead of a new companion, had been introduced into the chamber.

There was something dispiriting in the consciousness of this indifference,—a consciousness experienced more or less by every individual on first entering a circle of strangers, but more especially a circle in which the politeness and good-breeding peculiar to polished society is not known, and the absence of which leaves the natural egotism of men more openly exposed. I gave a sigh to the recollection of my late happy home, and remembered, with a lively sense of gratitude, the cordial kindness ever extended towards me by Percy Mortimer. A summons to tea interrupted the pensive reverie in which, after having sealed my letters, I indulged.

The large, well ventilated, and comfortable apartment, surrounded with well filled bookcases, in which my friend Percy, his preceptor and myself, were wont to pursue our studies, was brought before my mind's eye. The plea-

sant conversation that followed our readings, and the observations that illustrated them, recurred vividly to my memory, and when the knock at my door recalled me to the actual present, the contrast it presented saddened me.

The evening meal being despatched, and the inmates of Mrs. Chatterton's apartment having resumed their usual occupations, I felt as wholly alone as if I were the sole occupant. But I was not long suffered to remain in the state of abstraction into which I had fallen; for, with the good-nature peculiar to women, and which even in the humble class to which Mrs. Chatterton appertained, is seldom lost sight of, that good person, looking up from her interminable knitting, beckoned me to draw nearer to her side.

"You seem mopish like, Mr. Richard," said she. "And no wonder. Ah! I can feel for you, that I can, at finding yourself among total strangers. Every one experiences this at first, but some-how or other, one gets used to it at last; and then (though you will hardly believe this at present) one gets so accustomed to the place and people with whom one lives, that when one goes back to where one spent one's youthful days, it seems more strange than the place one left."

"He's in for it, I'll be blessed if he a'int!" said Wilson to Thomas, in a voice audible to every individual in the room, except the deaf Mrs. Chatterton.

"Yes, I give him joy of the long story," answered Thomas, and both tittered as they resumed their well-thumbed novels.

"Well, Mr. Richard, I wasn't always as you see me now," said Mrs. Chatterton, clearing her throat in a manner that indicated a preparation for a long story. "No, Mr. Richard; I was as brisk and lively a girl as you'd see in a day's walk, and in our village of Buttermuth—did you ever hear of Buttermuth, in Hertfordshire?"

A nod of dissent on my part supplied the place of words.

"Well,—I'm sure I wonder it is not more generally known,—folk used to say that there was not many girls like Lucy Mildred. My name was Lucy Mildred before I married, for I was called after my grand-aunt, as good a woman as could be found in all Hertfordshire. I always loved Buttermuth, and every tree and hedge in it, as if they were living creatures. Ay, Mr. Richard! and I loved the people too, even old cross Dame Parsons, as she used to be called, who never allowed a single creature to

come within reach of her, without giving him, or her, advice. Often and often used she to stop me to tell me what to do, and what to leave undone; and sure enough it was very tiresome, especially when I was in a hurry; and most of the young folk used to run away from her, and tell her to keep her lectures for the long days, but I never did so, but used to wait patiently and thank her, though I thought that she must have nothing to amuse her, or she would not pass all her time in giving advice, moreover when so few would listen, and still fewer would follow it. There couldn't be a merrier girl than I was, when just as I turned nineteen, my mother got a letter from a sister she had in London, saying that her husband having died, and she having no children, and being well to do in the world like, she wished to have one of her nieces sent up to keep her company. Betsy, my eldest sister, had been some time married, so she could not go, and Sarah was engaged to be married in a few months, so father and mother thought it best to send *me*, though the notion of parting with me, made them very sad. From the moment I heard I was to go, I became fonder of my father, mother, and sisters, than ever I had been before, though, God knows, I always

loved them dearly; and as for the place, I looked on every tree and flower with regret, for I thought I'd be far away when the leaves were falling, and that I couldn't be there to rejoice when they came out fresh and beautiful again in the spring. The very birds seemed like friends; and many a tear I shed when I bade good-bye to those I had known since I was born, but above all, to my parents and sisters. When I took leave of Dame Parsons, she blessed me. 'You were always a good girl, Lucy Mildred,' said she, 'and were never in a hurry, like all the other foolish girls in the village, who never will wait to hear a word of advice. Take this guinea, and with it my counsel, never to do any thing in haste——'"

"The old un has attended to the counsel," said Wilson.

"'Always listen to your elders, and never think you don't want advice.'

"I'd have filled the coach had I put into it all the presents that were made me by the neighbours—cakes, oranges, apples, pin-cushions, purses, and ribbons,—but I'm anticipating my departure.

"When I awoke the morning I was to leave home,—I had cried myself to sleep the night be-

fore,—and heard the cock crowing, and thought that I should no more be awakened by the sound, I began to weep afresh; and when I looked on Sarah, who was asleep by my side, and saw the tears were still on her eye-lashes, I felt as if my heart would break. And the bright daylight was shining through the white dimity curtains, and the dew was sparkling on the honeysuckle and roses that grew against the casement, and the old walnut-tree chest of drawers, that I had so often rubbed, looked as polished as Mr. Bingly's boots—oh! I felt a love even to the poor old furniture, every article of which, even now though fifty-six years are passed since then, appeared to me as dear friends, from whom it was pain to part. The sobs I could not restrain, awoke Sarah. For a moment she looked surprised; but then came the recollection that we were to part, and she fell on my shoulder and wept.

"'How I should like, dear sister,' said she, 'to see the chamber in which you are to sleep in your new home—the bed, the pattern of the paper, the curtains, and even the tables, chairs, and chest of drawers—for then I could fancy every thing about and around you. You will know at certain hours that I am in our old

room, thinking of you, looking at all the objects familiar to our eyes since we were little children, all of which will remind me of you, and this is some comfort; but until you write me every particular about your room, I sha'n't know how to picture you to myself in your new abode,' and poor Sarah's tears broke out afresh. 'But there is one way, dear sister,' said she, 'by which we can be together, in spirit at least, and that is by kneeling down, night and morning, at the same hour to pray, as we have been used to do from our infancy. Promise me that you will never forget to do this, for it will be my greatest consolation when you are far away.'

"I promised, and we knelt down that moment and prayed; and, though the tears streamed down our cheeks, we felt consoled. Prayers are blessed things, Mr. Richard, for young and old. They often comforted me in my youth; and now, when age has laid its heavy hand on me, they lighten my spirits."

"What a spoony the fellow must be," whispered Wilson to Thomas, "to listen to old Mother Chatterton's twaddle."

"Ay, ay, but he'll soon be too wise for that," answered Thomas.

"Yes, Mr. Richard," resumed the old wo-

man, "prayers are indeed blessed things, for they lead our minds to the absent, to the dead; and those we have mourned for do not seem *quite* lost: it is while we are praying for them that we have the liveliest hope of meeting them again."

CHAPTER IV.

"BUT to go back to my story," resumed Mrs. Chatterton, the next evening.—"At last the stage-coach stopped at the Black Bear, which was but a short distance from our cottage, and the horn sounded to tell us we must part, and we all arose, and embraced each other over and over again, and my mother and sisters accompanied me to the coach-office. How many times did my poor mother tell the coachman and the guard to take care of me; though sister Betsy expressed her wonder at such fears, and declared that *she* would be very glad to undertake a journey of twice the length, and by herself; for what could happen in a good stage-coach, and with a steady driver? Betsy was always a very different person from Sarah, and not half so much liked by the family; neither

did she show much affection to any of us, being wholly taken up with her husband, and a slave to her love of good eating.

"How anxiously my dear mother looked at the three passengers who were already seated in the coach, and expressed her hopes that they would be kind to her poor child. Many of the neighbours came to see me off, and each brought some little token of regard. My mother and sisters clasped me in their arms by turns, until the guard hurried me into the coach, and in a minute more it rattled off, while I stretched forth my head from the window, and saw the dear ones I had left, standing on the same spot, weeping bitterly. Is it not strange, Mr. Richard, that I can remember that moment as well as if it happened an hour ago, though many things that only occurred a few years back have escaped my recollection?—Is it not strange?

"'Don't take on so, young woman,' said an old man with a sour face, and wearing spectacles, who was seated opposite to me; 'it's no use whatsoever to cry, for it will be all the same in a hundred years hence.'

"'Let her have her cry out, it will do her good,' remarked an elderly woman at my side; 'it's only the youthful that can shed tears so

freely; and a time will come, when this poor young thing may wish to be able to cry as she does now.'

"'For my part, I can't see the good of crying,' observed a young man who had a pale face and weak eyes; 'if people leave old friends, they must hope to find new ones; and, to my thinking, new friends are much the pleasantest.'

"'You'll not think so when you have lived longer in the world,' answered the old woman.

"'There you happen to be wrong,' said the young man flippantly, 'for I have lived more in the world, though not half so long, as you have.'

"'It's to be hoped you have profited by it,' replied the old woman.

"'It will be all the same in a hundred years hence,' rejoined the old man.

"'It will *not* be all the same; and a man of your years should not put such heathenish notions into the heads of young people,' said the old woman, somewhat angrily.

"'And what notions pray, would *you* think it right to put into their heads instead?' asked the man with spectacles.

"'Ay, ma'am, tell us that?' asked the young man.

" 'I would put into the heads of the youthful, that on their own good or evil conduct, depends what their fate will be here and hereafter.'

" 'I thought as much,' answered the young man superciliously.

" 'I hope you will always think so,' said the old woman.

" 'But, if I should not?'

" 'Why, then, it will be all the same in a hundred years hence,' rejoined the old man.

" The elderly woman was about to enter into a discussion on this point, when the coach stopped at an alehouse to take up a parcel, and she instantly forgot her desire of refuting the opinions of her adversary, and asked for a glass of water, which she kindly put to my lips, saying, 'Drink this, my dear, it will do you good.'

" There was something so motherly in the action, and in the mode of it, that it recalled similar acts of kindness often experienced from my own mother, and brought the tears afresh to my eyes; but I no longer felt so strange and deserted like as before, now that one of my own sex, and a respectable-looking woman too, seemed to take such an interest in me.

" 'You'll soon forget the country, when you

have once seen what a delightful place Lunnon is,' said the young man. 'I can't bear being out of it long, though I do make the folk stare when I go home into the country,' and he looked complacently at his dress. 'How they do examine the cut of my clothes, and the shape of my hat when I go to church.'

"'More shame for them,' remarked the elderly woman, 'for when people go to the house of God, they ought to think of other matters than dress, and such like foolish things.'

"'It will be all the same in a hundred years hence,' observed the old man.

"'No, it will *not* be all the same,' said the elderly woman angrily, 'and you may find it won't be, to your cost; you ought not to put such thoughts into the heads of young people, if you are so weak as to entertain them yourself.'

"'Weak!' reiterated the old man, 'what do you call weak? I am a philosopher—a free-thinker.'

"'I'm sorry for you,' said my new acquaintance, sighing deeply; 'but I suspected as much. Then you are weak indeed! God bring you to a better state of mind.'

"'I'm a bit of a freethinker myself,' said the young man, and he pulled up the collars of his shirt, conceitedly.

"'Do you know what a freethinker means?' demanded the old woman.

"'To be sure I do—' hah! hah! hah! know what it means, indeed; that's a good idea. Why, it means a person who is not afraid of doing or saying what he thinks fit,—in short it is—it is a sort of a philosopher, as this gentleman very properly explained.'

"'I'll tell you what *I* think it means,' replied the elderly woman. 'A poor weak vain mortal, who not having sufficient understanding to comprehend the greatness and goodness of God, doubts or denies *his* power.'

"'You think, then, that I shall suffer hereafter for my freethinking?' asked the young man, with a contemptuous smile.

"'I judge not, lest I be judged,' answered the old woman; 'but I believe, that if not hereafter, you will suffer on earth, for as you cannot expect to escape from the trials and sorrows to which all are born, what consolation can you hope for them, or where look for patience to support them, if you disbelieve in a future state—

a state where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest?'

"'It will be all the same in a hundred years hence, that is my consolation,' said the old man.

"'Yes, it will be all the same in a hundred years hence,' repeated the young man. At this moment we became suddenly sensible that the coach was moving with a frightful velocity, and, as we were descending a very steep hill, we all became apprehensive of danger—'O Lord! O Lord! we shall be killed,' exclaimed the young man, his face growing ghastly from the force of terror; the old man grasped the holder at the side of the coach and clung convulsively to it, his countenance expressing all the agony of fear, while the old woman fervently recommended herself to the protection of heaven. We had nearly reached the bottom of the steep hill, when the coach was overturned, and I lost all consciousness of what occurred, until I found myself on the road side, supported by a woman, who was applying cold water to my face and temples, from which blood was streaming, occasioned by some cuts from the shattered glass of the coach-window, with which it had

come violently in contact. The old man was extended on the ground, groaning from the pain of a broken leg, the young one was bemoaning the fracture of his left arm, and the elderly woman, who had dislocated her wrist, and was severely bruised, was returning thanks to God for having escaped so well.

"'My leg, my leg!' exclaimed the old man. 'I'm sure it is broken in two or three places. Never was there any thing like the pain I suffer.'

"'My arm is much worse,' groaned the young man. 'No one can have an hidear of the excruciating torture I endure.'

"'Let us thank the Almighty that we have escaped with our lives,' said the old woman.

"'Thank God indeed,' murmured the would-be philosopher, 'for a broken leg.'

"'Yes, and for a broken arm,' added the young man; 'I see nothing to be thankful for.'

"'Can you not be consoled by the reflection that it will be all the same in a hundred years hence?' asked the old woman, somewhat sarcastically. 'This is the consolation of philosophy is it? just what I thought. It enables you to mock religion, and the dependence on Providence which it inspires, but it cannot

teach you to support pain, notwithstanding your constant boast, that it will be all the same in a hundred years hence.'

"'Get me conveyed to the next inn as speedily as possible, and dispatch some one for a surgeon,' said the would-be philosopher, writhing with pain, and turning from the calm, but searching glance of the old woman.

"'Yes, take us to the next hinn as quick as you can', rejoined the young man. 'You can have no hidear what my sufferings are, and some people,' and he looked angrily at the old woman, 'are so spiteful, that they have no pity for other people when they have had their precious limbs broken.'

"'You wrong me, for I see you allude to me,' observed the old lady, 'gladly would I afford you any relief in my power, but I wished you to become sensible of the weakness, as well as wickedness of the principle avowed by our fellow-traveller.'

"'Don't mind her, let her talk on; it will be all the same in a hundred years hence.—Oh! my leg, my leg, will no one support my leg?'

"'*I* will', said the old woman and she extended the only hand which the accident permitted her to use, and with the utmost gentle

ness and tenderness, supported the shattered limb, while four men placed the groaning free-thinker on a door, in order to remove him to the inn. A surgeon was called in, and the old woman refused to allow him to examine her wrist, until he had set the fractured limbs of her fellow-travellers.

"We pursued our journey to London alone, the two men being unable to proceed, and the rest of the route passed without accident, the excellent old lady giving me the best advice, and a cordial invitation to visit her in Gracechurch-street, where she resided. She took me in a coach to my aunt's dwelling, for my relation having waited herself at the coach-office for nearly an hour in expectation of my arrival, had returned to her home, leaving instructions for me to follow her in a hackney-coach; but my new friend would not trust me alone, so took me herself to my aunt's, into whose arms she confided me, promising to pay me a visit in a few days."

"Now comes the history of the London adventures," said Wilson to Thomas, "was there ever such a proser in the world as Mother Chatterton?"

"What did you say, Mr. Wilson ?" asked the old dame.

"I said," answered Wilson, speaking as loud as he could, "that I could listen for ever to your story, it is so very entertaining," and he thrust his tongue into his cheek, and winked at Thomas.

"'Tis very kind of you, I'm sure, to think so," replied Mrs. Chatterton, with a look of the utmost complacency.

"I hope you'll not leave out a single circumstance that took place after your arrival in London," said Thomas, slily; "for it would be a pity for Mr. Wallingford to miss any thing in such a lively story."

"Indeed you are too flattering, Mr. Thomas. I was afraid you'd be tired of hearing it."

"Never, Mrs. Chatterton, never. It's much more amusing than the history of Clarissa Harlowe. Why, you have not told it to us more than eight or nine times. Do you remember, Wilson, how often she has set us to sleep with it ?" The last remark was uttered in a low tone of voice.

"Bless me! it's nearly twelve o'clock," observed Mrs. Chatterton. "Well, how time flies!

I did not think it was so late;"—and having rang for the maid, who officiated in the various services of cook and parlour-maid, she retired to her chamber, civilly wishing good-night to her companions.

"I do not wonder at your looking tired," said Wilson, "for the old woman's story is enough to set any one to sleep: I am surprised you can listen to it."

"You would find it much more amusing to read a novel," said Thomas, "and you could, moreover, close it when you were tired, which can't be done with Mrs. Chatterton's clapper."

"Mrs. Chatterton is an excellent and kind-hearted woman," observed Mr. Burton, who had that moment won his party at chess, and was consequently in unusual good humour: "yes, Mrs. Chatterton is a highly respectable person and merits the attention which Mr. Wallingford shows her,—ay, and which reflects credit on him," resumed Mr. Burton.

CHAPTER V.

One day so exactly resembled another in the domicile in which I now found myself, that I felt disposed to acknowledge the truth of Mrs. Chatterton's observation on the effect of a monotonous routine of existence. My mind became sobered down to it; and I could have fancied that I had been weeks, nay, months, instead of days, an inhabitant in the dingy mansion in Mincing-lane. In the evening, Mrs. Chatterton resumed her drowsy reminiscences, to which I listened with a patience, if not with an interest, that won her regard. Letters from Percy Mortimer proved, that amidst the occupations and amusements of his college life, he had not forgotten his humble friend, to whom, with all the frankness peculiar to his nature, he poured out his feelings as unaffectedly as

when we rambled together through the park, at that pleasant home to which my thoughts so often reverted.

"Well, sir," said Mrs. Chatterton, next evening, taking up her knitting and narrative together, "we left off my story at the point of my arrival in London. My aunt's reception was less cordial and affectionate than I had anticipated; and this coldness made me think still more frequently of those dear relations whom I had left behind. I was continually dreaming of them, and pining for the green fields, and the songs of the birds, the fresh air that used to stir my hair and make my brow feel so cool, but above all, for my mother and Sarah. My aunt cared nothing about the country, and had no pleasure in talking of it, which prevented me from opening my heart to her, so I felt so solitary that I could not reconcile myself to my new abode. It's a sad thing, Mr. Richard, to live with those who have no interest about what one is always thinking of, and to be obliged to keep one's thoughts locked up in one's own heart, when one is longing to be able to tell them to those who could sympathize with us.

"Mrs. Elrington, for that was the name of my female fellow-traveller in the coach, came

often to see me, and my aunt allowed me sometimes to go and spend an evening with her. There I met a young man, her nephew, who was a clerk in the firm of Mortimer, Allison and Finsbury, and who always spent the Sabbath with her. He was the handsomest young man I had ever seen; had eyes as dark as a sloe, but so mild withal, that his glances moved me, whenever—and it was very often—I found his eyes fixed on mine. His hair was a bright glossy brown, and curled beautifully; and his teeth were for all the world like newly-blanched almonds. Then he had a voice so musical, the tones of it still dwell in my ears as fresh as if heard only an hour ago.

"Well, well," and Mrs. Chatterton wiped her eyes, "it is strange I never can speak of him without tears. This fine young man, Mr. Richard, soon began to think that his aunt's house was never so pleasant as when I was in it, yet he loved her as tenderly as if she were his own mother. He remarked how my heart yearned for the country, and would continually draw me out to speak of it. He took a lively interest in all I told him about our garden at home, and the flowers that filled it; and this made me like him all the better. Then his aunt,

used to tell me how kind and attentive he was to her, and what a good husband she was sure he would make; and I began to think so too, though still I maintained a maidenly reserve with him, because I had often heard my mother say that a young girl ought never to let a man know that she liked him, until he had made an offer of marriage. One day, it was my birthday, he brought me a present; and that gift, though it was but a trifling one, gave me more pleasure than any I had ever received before. It was a flower-pot, with a fine double wall-flower in it. No! Mr. Richard, I'll never forget the effect produced on my mind and heart, by that wall-flower. From that moment to this, I have never smelt a wall-flower without thinking of him; and though he has been above thirty-five years in his grave, the perfume of it brings him back to my memory, as fresh as if we only parted yesterday. He had heard me say how much I liked a large wall-flower close to my bed-room window at home, and was it not thoughtful of him to remember it? Another thing was strange,—which was, that from the day he gave me that wall-flower, it seemed as if he was one of those dear ones at home, for I could not think of them, without his being

mingled with my thoughts; and, as I was continually thinking of them, so he too was constantly in my mind—I watered my wall-flower, and watched it, as never flower was watched before. I used to wash off the black spots that were continually falling on it, and almost weep that it should be so disfigured. Oh! the odour of that poor flower changed the whole place; for when it stood on my window-sill, and that a little gleam of sunshine used to penetrate between the chimnies and slanting roofs of the adjoining houses, I used to forget how dreary and dingy was the aspect of the spot, and was carried back in imagination to the garden at home by the perfume of my poor wall-flower. I used to sit thinking of my mother and of Sarah; ay, and to tell the truth, of *him* too, who gave it to me, whenever I could find time.

"My aunt was a little disposed to jealousy, and soon began to think that I liked Mrs. Elrington better than herself. She found many excuses for preventing me from going to see her half so often as I was invited; and whenever Mrs. Elrington mentioned her nephew, which she often did, and always with praise, my aunt would shake her head, and say, she was sure he was like all other young men, no wiser or

better than he should be. This used to hurt poor Mrs. Elrington's feelings very much, but mine still more; and I felt my cheeks burn while my aunt was railing against young men in general; but especially against those amongst them who were spoilt by doting mothers or aunts.

"Mrs. Elrington, too, though a most estimable woman, had always a great desire of correcting the opinions of those she conversed with, and would often find fault with those of my aunt, who, having a high opinion of her own wisdom, could ill brook having it called in question. By degrees, a coolness grew between the two old ladies—Mrs. Elrington used to say, that Mrs. Appleshaw was an uncharitable woman, who thought ill of every one; and my aunt used to say, that Mrs. Elrington was half a methodist, and much addicted to correcting those who were much wiser than herself.

"Though I saw Mrs. Elrington's nephew much less frequently than during the first year of our acquaintance, I thought of him every day more and more; and he, too, felt similarly, and used to tell me so, whenever, and it was but seldom, he could snatch a moment to whisper to

me, when his aunt or mine were looking another way.

"At length, one day Mrs. Elrington came to my aunt's house. The moment she entered I guessed there was something more than common in the visit, for she wore her best cloak, bonnet, and gown. She said, she wished to speak alone with my aunt, who told me to go up to my room. How my heart beat, and how my cheeks burned; I counted every minute, and long enough they seemed, until, after having waited an hour or so, I heard Mrs. Elrington go away; but as I was not called down, I remained in my room until dinner was ready. My aunt's face was very red, which boded no good, as it always denoted when she was in an ill-humour. The meal passed nearly in silence, but she carved the joint of meat before her with an air of impatience, found fault with the maid who waited on us, helped me, as if she would have rather not, and gave nothing to her favourite cat.

"No sooner was dinner cleared away than she looked at me with a stern glance, and asked me if I knew what brought Mrs. Elrington to her house that day? I answered that I did not;

upon which she said, 'that the impudence of some people was surprising, when a poor clerk in a banking-house proposed to marry *her* niece; and his aunt, forsooth, thought him entitled to do so—nay, more, came herself to make the offer.'

"You might have knocked me down with a feather, so overcome was I by this news. I trembled at my aunt's anger, grieved that she should think the proposal presumptuous; but, nevertheless, the joy of knowing that I was *indeed* beloved, and sought by the man who occupied so much of my thoughts, was uppermost in my mind.

"'Why, how is this?' said my aunt, 'you don't seem the least surprised or vexed at the folly of that stupid Mrs. Elrington, or her blockhead of a nephew!'

"Think, Mr. Richard, of her calling Henry a blockhead!—'Indeed, aunt,' said I, 'that is to say—I don't know whether—I mean—that perhaps——'

"'The girl is positively crazy!' interrupted my aunt. 'What *does* all this mean? You don't know—that is, you *do* know, and probably authorised this piece of impudence.'

"'Indeed, aunt,' said I—but I could get no

further, for my tears flowed so fast I could not speak.

" 'What is the girl crying about?' asked she; 'I suppose the next thing you will tell me is, that you are in love, as they call it, with this silly young chap? It's no use crying, I can tell you, for I will have no niece of mine making a fool of herself. *I* never was in love, and why should you be, I should like to know? Handsome is that handsome does. If this stupid young man had a comfortable independence to support you, and leave you free from want at his death, you might be in love as much as you like, for then you would have some excuse for liking him; but a poor clerk, forsooth, I never heard of such a thing!'

" The thoughts conjured up in my mind by the notion of the death of the man I loved,—for the probability of so sad an event, I had never for a moment previously contemplated, made my tears flow with increased bitterness.

" 'You may cry until you are tired,' said my aunt angrily, 'but you shan't make a fool of me, I can tell you. You shall not see this silly young man, or his old fool of an aunt, any more, if I can help it; for I won't have a niece of mine to come on the parish when she is left a widow;

with perhaps half-a-dozen troublesome ugly little children to look after.'

"'But, dear aunt,' said I, though I trembled so much I could scarcely speak; '*he* may not die before me, he is healthy, aunt.'

"'Don't talk nonsense, child; every woman who has common sense should look forward to the death of her husband; ay, and prepare for it, before she marries. *I* did so, and insisted on having a comfortable provision before I consented to wed Mr. Appleshaw. If you *are* determined to fall in love, which I now begin to believe, let *me* choose the man; though even then you would act more wisely by not falling in love, for men take advantage when girls are such fools as to like them, and always make a poorer provision for them.'

"'But I know, aunt, I could not live if I had the misfortune to lose a husband I loved.'

"'Fiddle-de-dee! don't tell me any such nonsense. Live indeed! as if grief ever killed any one. You are a silly girl, and know nothing of the world. Listen to my advice, and you will profit by adopting it. Never think of any man who cannot leave you a comfortable provision. There is old Mr. Dobson round the corner, who is as rich as a jew, I have noticed

him looking at you very often as if he admired you. *He* would make an excellent match; or there is Mr. Milderton, who keeps the tobacconist's shop in Bishopsgate-street, and who could settle a good round sum on you. In case you marry him, you need not change the mark on your clothes, as the M. will still serve, and this will save a good deal of trouble.'

"The recollection of the odour of my poor wall-flower, brought in opposition to the nauseous smell of the tobacconist's shop, and the contrast of the owner of it, whose violent squint and lameness I had observed when my aunt had two or three times paused to converse with him as we passed his door, renewed my tears, which so enraged my aunt, that she told me I was an obstinate, disobedient, self-willed fool; and that, if I ever again saw the silly young man I was making such a fuss about, she would send me back to the country. This threat alarmed me, for I could not bear to think of leaving the place where the man I loved dwelt. It was something to be in the same city, to know there was a possibility of seeing him in the street, even though I dared not speak to him, and this was better than going wholly out of his reach.

"The following Sunday, the first object I saw on entering the pew in the church which my aunt frequented was my poor Henry seated opposite, and I trembled from head to foot lest my aunt should also see him. Luckily, she was so short-sighted that she never noticed him. How my heart beat when I saw that he had a sprig of wall-flower in the button-hole of his coat; and how hot I felt my cheeks grow, when he pressed it to his lips, and gave me such a tender look. I never took my eyes off my prayer-book again until the service was over; for I thought it would be sinful indeed, to give my attention to any thing but God in his own temple—still the thought of Henry's being there was a comfort. Our prayers were mingling together beneath the same roof, our hearts were lifted up to the Almighty, and this was a blessing. My aunt never perceived Henry; but unfortunately, Mr. Milderton, the tobacconist did, and lost no time in informing her that the young man whom he saw coming to her house sometimes, had been to church the Sunday before, and never took his eyes off her niece.

"'Oh! the cunning baggage never to have told me of this,' said my aunt; 'I'll soon send her into the country, that's what I'll do; ay,

and leave her there, too, until she forgets that there young chap.'

"I was an unwilling listener to the conversation between Mr. Milderton and my aunt; being seated at work in a small back room, separated only by a thin partition from the one she occupied, and verified the truth of the old proverb that listeners never hear good of themselves.

"'Don't blame your niece too much, she is young and inexperienced, and it may be that she never even saw that the young man was at church.'

"'Don't tell me, Mr. Milderton, about her being young and inexperienced; as if her being so was not an additional reason for consulting me, and taking my advice in every thing; and as to her not seeing that the stupid young man was at church, I'll warrant me, she saw him before she sat down in her pew, ay, and planned the meeting too. I'm a woman, Mr. Milderton, and know well enough what passes in the minds of those young fools.'

"'All I can say, Mrs. Appleshaw, is, that she never took her eyes off her prayer-book during the whole service, or the long sermon.'

"'Fiddle-de-dee! you are a simpleton, Mr. Milderton, and don't understand women as well as I do. Why, they can see even when their

eyelids are cast down, better than men can when their eyes are wide open. 'Yes, she shall go into the country, that she shall.'

"Before I knew Henry, how joyful would this resolution of my aunt have rendered me, for I longed to see my old home again, and thought of little else: but now to leave the place where he dwelt, the place where I might hope to see him, even though the happiness of conversing with him was denied me, made me miserable. Mr. Milderton had no sooner taken his departure, than my aunt summoned me to her presence, and announced her determination that I should return to my parents the next day, adding, that she would write a few lines by the post forthwith, to prepare them for my reception.

"'I command you not to let that silly woman, Mrs. Elrington, know that you are leaving town,' said my aunt; 'and as to her stupid nephew, much as I have had reason to be dissatisfied with you, I do not think quite so ill of you, as to suspect that you would write to *him*.'

"The rest of the day was occupied in packing up my clothes, listening to the advice, mingled with reproaches, of my aunt, and indulging in melancholy reflections. 'How often did I reproach myself for feeling so indifferent to the

prospect of meeting my family—a prospect that, were it not for my affection for Henry, would have filled me with delight, while now, I could think of nothing but my separation from him.

"When at night I retired to the little bedroom in which I had so often thought of, and dreamt of him, I could no longer control the tears I had checked in the presence of my aunt. I looked again and again at my poor wall-flower, and pondered whether it would be possible to take it with me to the country? but as my aunt had declared her intention of accompanying me to the coach-office in the morning, I knew I could not venture to carry the flower-pot without its being seen by her, and leading to some disagreeable comment; and to put it in my box would be impossible. While I was watering the flower with my tears, Anna, the servant of my aunt, entered the chamber on tip-toes, and without shoes, and softly closing the door, told me not to speak above my breath, lest her mistress should hear us.

"'Ah, miss!' said the good-natured girl, 'how sorry I am that you are going, for it was a pleasure to have some one in the house as could smile, or say a civil word to one; for, as to missis, she does nothing but scold from

morning till night; and I am sure, miss, it's a blessing to you, as has friends to go to, while I,' and here poor Anna's tears streamed, 'am an orphan, and bound by the parish to missis, so she may scold me as much as she likes, and I can't help it.'

"Having spoken a few kind words to the poor girl, she asked me what I meant to do with my wall-flower?

"'I know, miss, you won't like to leave it here, for I've noticed you often and often looking at it so lovingly, just for all the world as I used to look at a poor sparrow I once caught, and kept for many months, until that wicked spiteful cat of missis killed it one day. I never knew what it was to have any thing to love, until I got that poor bird, miss, and I thought my heart would break when I lost it. I was thinking, miss, that when you are gone, the first time missis sends me out any where, I could take the flower, pot and all, to Mrs. Elrington, and tell her, with your love, to take care of it for your sake.'

"I was delighted with Anna's project, for by it Mrs. Elrington would become acquainted with my departure, and Henry would learn it from her. I could have hugged the good girl

for the offer, and gladly consented to avail myself of it, though conscience whispered that by so doing I evaded the commands of my aunt; nor could all the sophistry with which I tried to reason myself into the belief, that as the project had not originated with me I was not to be blamed for adopting it, silence my self-reproaches.

"'Yes, miss,' resumed Anna, 'I'm sure and sartain that Mrs. Elrington and her nevey will take care of it, for I know they both like you; and I'll tell 'em how sorry you were, and how you cried, when you looked at the poor flower, and I'll just give 'em a hint—(how I felt my cheeks glow as she added)—that it wasn't the parting with missis that made you so sorrowful. So you see, miss, that missis will find they can learn you are gone, and where to also, in spite of all her orders to me, not to take any letters for you, or not to give you any.'

"Though grieved and mortified that my aunt should have mistrusted me, I desired Anna not on any account to tell Mrs. Elrington any thing that could convey a notion that I was ungrateful to my aunt; a caution, that not only surprised, but irritated Anna.

"'And what had you to be grateful for,

miss?' asked she. 'Didn't you do all the needle-work of the house, which, before you came, she was always obliged to put out, and pay dear for? Didn't you bear with all her contrariness and scoldings, as if you were like me, a poor orphan, put out apprentice by the parish?—and what has she ever done, except to pay for the little bit of breakfast and dinner you eat? which is'n't worth being grateful to any one for.'

"I bestowed a few trifling presents on poor Anna, emptied the contents of my purse, amounting to three or four shillings, the remains of my mother's parting gift, into her hand, and dismissed her, overpowered with gratitude, and dissolved in tears.

"The thought that it was the last night I should sleep in the same town with Henry, kept me long from finding the repose of which I stood so much in need, and I was in the midst of a dream, in which he was repeating his vows of eternal love to me, when my aunt roused me from my sleep, uttering reproaches on my laziness. I hurried through my dressing, gulped down the hot tea offered me, and long before my aunt had despatched the muffins and buttered toast, which, as usual, she found fault

with, while eating most heartily of them, I was ready to set out for the coach-office.

"'Just like you,' said she; 'put off getting up until the last moment, in order that I should be obliged to half choke myself with my breakfast; and you will undertake your long journey with an empty stomach, get home, looking as if I had starved you, and then your family will fancy you have been ill-used.'

"'Suppose I put up a few nice sandwiches for miss?' said Anna, who was replenishing the tea-pot.

"'Do so,' answered my aunt, 'but prepare them quickly, for I cannot wait: and if you hadn't been a fool, you'd have thought of having them ready; but every one about me thinks of nothing, but leaves the burden of all things on my shoulders.' When we were entering the hackney-coach, poor Anna could not repress her tears.

"'God be with you, miss,' sobbed the good-hearted girl, 'and send you a safe journey. Ah, miss! you are happy, for you are going to those that will love you,' and here her tears impeded her utterance.

"'Marry-come-up!' said my aunt. 'Pray, who gave you leave to cry, just as if you were

one of the family. What can *you* know of people loving?—you, who have neither friend nor relation in the wide world, and only me to depend on, who keep you out of charity.'

" 'Ay, so you tell me every day, ten times at least,' answered Anna.

" 'Does the saucy wench dare to reply to me?' said my aunt, her cheeks growing red with anger; but before she could vent her ire on Anna, the hackney-coach was driven on, and nearly the whole time we were going to the office, was passed in reproaches on the ingratitude of servants, and the pity due to those who had the misfortune to require their services. Our parting was unmarked by any tenderness on her part, and the tears shed by me, if the truth must be owned, were given to Henry and his kind aunt. The last words I heard her utter as the coach rolled away from the coach-office were, 'Don't make a fool of yourself by crying, for that will do you no good; you see I never cry.'

"There were only two persons besides myself in the coach. One of these was an old man who wore spectacles, and was exceedingly deaf; and the other a boy of about twelve years old,

who seemed of an inquisitive turn, as he commenced a string of questions to the old man, who only became conscious of being addressed, when his impatient companion pulled the lapel of his coat, an appeal which drew forth the confession, 'I am a little hard of hearing, young gentleman.'

"As our heavy vehicle rolled over the pavement, I looked anxiously in the faces of the persons passing along the streets, thinking that, by some happy chance, I might see Henry; and so occupied were my thoughts by his image, that I fancied every tall young man I saw, bore a resemblance to him. When we had left the streets, and reached the suburbs,—where lines of small, trim-looking houses, with flower-pots in the well-cleaned windows, and little gardens in front, showed that their owners aspired to consider them rural dwellings,—I thought how happy I should be, if married to Henry, and established in one of these neat abodes, his good aunt residing with us. I pictured to myself the simple but neat furniture, the white dimity curtains, with their gay chintz borders, the comfortable easy chair for Mrs. Elrington, and, above all, the quantity of double wall-flowers

with which our garden should be stocked, until I almost fancied that to be reality which only my fancy painted. I was aroused from this happy day-dream by finding my cloak pulled by my youthful fellow-traveller, who, when I turned towards him, asked me—'Are you also deaf? I have been asking you questions this last half-hour. How I hate having people deaf,—don't you?'

"'It must certainly be very disagreeable to those who are so,' answered I.

"'O! I was not thinking of them, they soon get used to it; but for those who are *not* deaf, it is very enraging to be obliged to ask the same question half-a-dozen times before one can make oneself heard. Look at that old man; you see *he* doesn't mind a bit being as deaf as a post; he looks as happy as if he could hear every word that is said. Where are you going to?'

"'To Buttermuth,' replied I.

"'Have you been long in London?'

"'Yes, a considerable time.'

"'What took you to London?'

"'A stage-coach,' answered I, somewhat maliciously.

" 'O! I don't mean *how* you went, but *why* you went?'

" 'To stay with an aunt.'

" 'What! that cross old woman that came with you to the coach-office?—Didn't you hate her? I'm sure I should. How old are you?'

" 'Eighteen.'

" 'Six whole years older than I am. I wish I was eighteen, for then I should be done with school. Did you not think I was more than twelve years old?—every body takes me to be thirteen. What's your name?'

" 'Lucy.'

" 'Lucy what?'

" 'Mildred.'—It would be tedious, Mr. Richard, to tell you one half the questions this troublesome boy asked me; but so wholly did he preclude the possibility of my indulging my own thoughts, that I heartily wished myself released from his company, and formed the resolution, if ever again thrown into the society of a school-boy, to affect deafness, until I could ascertain that my freedom from that infirmity would not expose me to the annoyance under which I was then suffering. I had nearly lost patience with my inquisitor, when, the coach

having stopped to change horses, an old woman with a basket well stored with oranges and cakes approached the window, and so wholly engrossed the attention of my troublesome companion, that I had a reprieve. He expended the whole contents of his purse in purchasing a supply of her cakes and fruit, and laid in a stock that might have served a moderate appetite for several days. He devoured the cakes so rapidly, that even our fellow-traveller advised him to forbear, but the counsel seemed only to urge him on, and when they had disappeared, he had recourse to the oranges, the juice of which left ineffaceable marks on my gown, in spite of all my efforts to protect it from his reckless mode of satisfying his gluttonous propensities. The motion of the carriage, operating on his over-charged stomach, produced the most painful effect on the youth, and its consequence the most disagreeable one on his unfortunate fellow-travellers. Suffice it to say, that my garments were rendered unwearable, and the coat of the deaf man was spoilt. He bore this annoyance less patiently than I did; but his reproaches seemed to have no effect on the boy, who continued to suffer from the result of his gluttony until the coach stopped

at our village, and I was released from the disgusting position I had occupied ever since his illness had commenced."

The sound of the clock striking twelve, warned Mrs. Chatterton that it was time to withdraw for the night; and she, unmindful of the sneering remarks often uttered, during the course of her narrative, by Messrs. Thomas and Wilson, assured me that she would continue her little history, now that she saw how much it interested me; for it was a pleasure, she said, to find so attentive a listener.

"And not only a pleasure but a rarity too," said Wilson, in an under tone; "for the old woman never found any of us so patient under the infliction. You surely can't be such a flat as to find any amusement in her old humdrum adventures?" continued Wilson, addressing himself to me, with a contemptuous air, which he took little pains to conceal.

"As much, probably, as you find in the novel which you have been reading," answered I. "I prefer truth, however simple and unvarnished, to fiction, unless it be the work of some author of acknowledged merit; and as I do not attempt to question your right to indulge your taste,

you will be so good as to leave me to the indulgence of mine."

"Well said, young man!" exclaimed Mr. Murdoch, who was then lighting his bed-chamber candle, and who from that hour treated me with more kindness.

CHAPTER VI.

"Well, Mr. Richard, let me see, where did we break off last night?" said Mrs. Chatterton.

"You were just arrived at Buttermuth," answered I.

"And so I was, now I recollect it—thank you, Mr. Richard, for remembering it so well. Ah! when you come to be old, Mr. Richard, you will find it a great pleasure to recall the days of your youth, even though when those days were actually passing, you might have thought them sorrowful enough; but time softens every thing, and enables one to speak of events calmly, that once filled the mind with sadness. I feel, when relating my trials to you, as if they had occurred to some one else, though many a tear they cost me when they happened; but all connected with our youth, has in old age, a charm in it, just as the recollection of summer with its

sunshine, blue skies, green trees, and bright flowers, comes back to us in the dark and dreary days of winter, and we wonder we were not more happy when that joyous season was ours.

"I found my mother waiting my arrival at the coach-office, and although she looked more gravely than I had ever before seen her do, she welcomed me with all a mother's tenderness. How changed appeared our village, and every thing around it! The houses looked small and mean, the place itself deserted, and our garden, of which I had so often thought during my absence, and given such descriptions of to Mrs. Elrington and her nephew, seemed to shrink into insignificance, as I passed through its narrow gravel walk to enter our house. The rooms of our cottage, struck me as having diminished in size; and the plain, but well scrubbed chairs and tables looked shabby after the smarter furniture of my aunt, and Mrs. Elrington. The scene was altogether different from what I had expected, though in what the difference consisted, I really could not tell, for no alteration had been made during my absence. The change was not in the place, but in me; and when I ought to have felt nothing but joy

at being restored to my home and kind parents and sisters, a sadness, I could neither conceal nor control, stole over me, and brought the tears to my eyes. My mother grew more grave as she observed my grief.

"'I fear child,' said she, 'that what your aunt wrote us, is but too true, and that you have formed an improper attachment, your obstinacy in continuing which, against her advice, compelled her to send you back. This is a sad blow to us, for though we should have been heartily glad to have you with us again, yet, for you to be sent away with only a few hours' notice, when we, and all our neighbours thought you were to remain with your aunt during her life, is a very sad affair. What will people say, or think? Dame Parsons will be going from house to house, talking of it, I warrant me.— O! Lucy, my unthinking, but dear child, what a pity it is that you have behaved so ill!'

"As soon as my tears would allow me to speak, I told the whole truth to my mother, who kissed me affectionately, and declared her perfect belief in my statement; and, becoming now more composed, I unpacked my clothes, and having changed my dress, set off to see my sister, whom my heart yearned to embrace. I

expected to find her the lively and fond creature I had left her, but one glance showed me, she was no longer the same. When I entered, she was sitting by the cradle of her child, rocking it with her foot, while her hands were busily employed at needle-work. She seemed to have grown ten years older in the year and a half I had been absent, and there was a staid, orderly look about her, wholly unlike the gay aspect for which she was formerly remarkable. She made a motion to rise when she saw me, but looking at the cradle, checked herself, waved her hand towards me to indicate the necessity of silence, then beckoned me to her embrace, and having pressed me in her arms, silently pointed to the sleeping babe, and whispered, 'Poor dear little soul! she is cutting a tooth, and has not closed her eyes the whole night.'

"'You look, my dear sister, as if you had not closed yours for many nights,' said I, remarking her heavy eyes and pale cheeks.

"'O! I don't mind it,' replied she, 'as long as my own darling can procure a little repose in the day. Is she not a sweet pretty creature, sister?' and she drew aside the little white curtain that shaded the child's face. The

movement, gentle as it had been, awoke the infant, who forthwith began to utter the most piercing cries.

" 'Don't let her see you sister,' said the alarmed mother; 'the sight of a strange face always sets her crying. Poor dear pet! she is naturally the quietest child in the whole world, but cutting her teeth plagues her so, that it makes her quite fretful. Bless its dear, sweet, pretty face!—there's a darling, don't cry!' and she dandled the screaming child, bestowing on it the most tender expressions, and covering its face with kisses. 'Isn't your niece a beauty?' asked my sister. 'See what laughing blue eyes she has, and what a lovely little mouth!'

" The eyes being filled with tears precluded me not only from judging of their colour, but from forming a notion of their capability of laughing, and the mouth being distended to its utmost extent by screaming, looked any thing but lovely when my sister called my attention to it.

" 'Ah! you can't imagine what a blessing it is, Lucy, to have a child,' and she looked at hers with eyes beaming with affection.

" 'How glad I am to see you again, dear sister,' said I, and I kissed her cheek. This involuntary endearment on my part passed un-

noticed on hers, and I resumed, 'how long it seems since we parted.'

"'Do you think so?' answered Sarah. 'Baby is now seven months' old; and as I did not marry until two months after you went, and I was nearly ten months a wife before I became a mother, you must have been nineteen months away. Well, I'm sure I didn't think it had been half so long; but time flies so fast when one has a good husband and such a darling as this,' and she again kissed her child. 'See what a dear, sweet, nice creature she is! look at her legs, and now she is as quiet as a lamb—bless her dear heart!'

"It was true the child had ceased to cry, and for a simple reason, the mother had stopped its screams by filling its mouth; but even while greedily imbibing the maternal nutriment, the tears still continued to flow from the ill-shaped eyes of my sister's idol, while she nevertheless indulged in the most lavish praises of its temper, as well as of its beauty.

"'I am so glad you are returned,' said Sarah, and I felt pleased at even this expression of kindness, though it by no means answered my expectations of the joy she would experience at our first meeting after our long and only

separation; but my satisfaction became diminished when she added, 'Yes, I am very glad you are come back, for I wanted so much to show you my darling baby.' In fact, I discovered that Sarah, my own dear Sarah, at parting with whom I had wept so bitterly nineteen months before, had now become so wholly engrossed by her husband and child, as to regard me with indifference, and to desire my return home solely that I might see her child. She had no interest, no thought, for aught save the two objects she idolized, and was too artless to conceal this fact. I left her cottage with a dejected heart. This, then, was the meeting I had so often pictured to myself, so often dreamt of, during my absence, yet how different was it from what I had expected it would be! I wept as I compared the reality with the imaginary re-union, and finding I had no longer a place in my sister's affections or happiness, I wished myself back again in London, where at least I was necessary to the happiness of Mrs. Elrington, her nephew, and poor Anna, the servant of my aunt.

"The first discovery of the altered feelings of one on whom a person had fondly relied, and who, from infancy, had been tenderly cherished

and implicitly trusted in, is a severe trial to the heart. I felt this, and while lamenting the indifference of Sarah was persuaded that were I the wife of Henry Chatterton,—a lot I considered the most blessed in life,—my affection for my sister would have remained unchanged, as I never could forget our infant sports, and girlish confidences, when we were so very dear to each other. It was with depressed spirits I then proceeded to my sister Betsy, whom I found busily engaged in preparing dinner for her family. The fumes from a savoury mess seething on the fire, impregnated the whole house, and bore evidence that onions formed no inconsiderable portion of the ingredients.

" 'And so here you are, sister, back again in the country, and right glad I dare to swear you are, to find yourself safe at Buttermuth. Lawk! how pale and thin you *do* look, to be sure; but no wonder, if all that folk tell me about Lunnun be true. Why, I'm told one never can get half enough to eat there, things are so dear. You'll stay and dine with us, won't you? and a good dinner you shall have, I warrant you. Here's my children, see what fine fellows they are,' pointing to two sturdy boys and a girl. 'Bless your heart! they eat as much in a

day as their father, and he's no bad hand at a knife and fork. Throw in a few more onions Meggy into the stew,' addressing a red-elbowed wench, 'and add a lump of pork, it will give richness to it, for the beef was somewhat lean. Dear me, how nicely it smells. Don't it make you hungry, sister?'

"'I want my dinner,' said the elder boy; 'and I too!' screamed the younger, in which cry the little sister joined. 'And I must have strong ale,' said the child; 'and I too,' reiterated his brother.

"'Will you be quiet, you naughty troublesome brats, or I'll whip you all round,' said my sister. 'They are so spoilt by their father,' whispered she, 'that there is no bearing them.' The children, as if anxious to prove the accuracy of their mother's representations, became still more riotous and insubordinate; and so great was their clamour, notwithstanding the angry reproaches, accompanied by sundry boxes on the ears from my sister, that I was compelled to abridge my visit and return home, with a head aching severely from the noise of my troublesome nephews, and the boisterous proceedings of their enraged mother.

"I found my father seated by the little oak table which I had so often polished in former

days, and which had lost none of its brightness under the care of my excellent mother. He was gravely listening to her justification of my conduct, and embraced me affectionately; but, shall I confess it, the odour of the farm-yard, with which his smock-frock and leathern gaiters were reeking, almost overpowered me, after having been so long unaccustomed to it.

"'But what is the objection to this young chap that dame Appleshaw writes about?' asked my father. 'She says that he is a weak silly fool, that can make no settlement on our girl when he dies: just what she said of me when I proposed to marry thee, old girl; yet I've made thee a good husband as times go, ha'n't I? and if God calls me away from thee to-morrow, I'll leave thee free from want, and what more can any reasonable woman desire, I should like to know? Is this same young chap a wild 'un? does he drink, game, idle away his time, and torment his old aunt?'

"'No, dear father,' answered I, trembling while I spoke, 'he is the nicest young man I ever saw,—so genteel, so good, so kind to his aunt.'

"'Ay, there it is, always the nicest young man; that's just what every one of them there foolish girls always says,' muttered my father.

" 'It's just what I said about you,' rejoined my mother, 'so you need not find fault with it.'

" 'No, dang my buttons! if I ought, or if I will either,' said he, and he rose from his seat and kissed my mother's cheek. 'And so thee said I was the nicest young man, and so good and so genteel: come, old girl, and give us another buss for that,' and the old man again affectionately embraced my mother.

" 'And what has this same young chap got to live on, girl?' demanded he.

" 'I never heard, father,' answered I.

" 'How should she know, poor thing!' said my mother; 'I dare say she never gave a thought to the matter any more than I did, when you came a courting me.'

" 'What trade has the young chap got to live by?' asked my father.

" 'He is a clerk in a great banking-house in the city, father; for I heard his aunt telling mine that he had an excellent situation.'

" 'Why, then, he can't have less than from eighty to a hundred pounds a-year salary,' observed my father, rubbing his hands; 'and the girl of our class that wouldn't find that enough to live decently and comfortably on, must be more unreasonable than any child of mine is. I

hope; so I think your aunt has behaved like a fool, and so I'll tell her whenever I see her; and as for the young chap, if he comes down here whenever he gets a holiday from his office, why we'll show him we are not so great or grand in our notions as Mrs. Appleshaw, who was always a selfish woman: yes, wife, she always was, so it's no use your shaking your head, and making long faces, for I always speak my mind, that's what I do; and I have no notion of her sending off our child at a few hours' notice, just for all the world as if the girl had behaved badly, and was about to disgrace herself and us, and so I'll write and tell her.'

"Evening came; and while I arranged my things in the little bedroom formerly shared with Sarah, the perfume of the flowers floated in through the open window, and the song of the blackbird and the thrush stole on my ear. How often, when pent in my close confined chamber in London, had I recalled all that was now around me with a pensive pleasure, and compared it with that gloomy little room and its dreary prospect of slanting roofs and chimney-pots, where the mewing of cats, and the busy hum of loud voices, carriages, and carts, alone were heard: yet now, restored to the scene

so often and fondly remembered, it brought not the gratification then anticipated, and I could only think of the distance that separated me from Henry, and the little chance there seemed to be that we should ever meet again. The odour of the wall-flower that filled the room, brought his image so forcibly before me, that I could not restrain my tears; though it seemed strange too, that a perfume which, when in London, always recalled my home so fondly to my mind, could now, that I was there, only bring back the thoughts of Henry; and gladly would I have resigned that home, so often pined for when absent from it, and the balmy air, and fresh breathing flowers of the garden, that filled my cheerful looking little chamber, for the gloomy one in London, with my solitary, drooping, but well-beloved wall-flower, the gift of Henry, and the knowledge that we were in the same city, and might see each other, though only at a distance. Nay, the sound of the muffin-bell, or the milkman's cry, once considered so monotonous, would have been at that moment preferred by me to the carols of the birds, then giving such delightful music, because those sounds would have proved my vicinity to him I loved, while these I was listening

to, only reminded me of the distance that separated us.

"Young and inexperienced as I was, I felt that the fruition of our wishes does not always bring happiness, if indeed that blessing ever can be ours on earth; and the reflection of how often I had longed to be where I now was, yet found not that which I had anticipated, brought that truth home to my mind. At our homely but comfortable evening meal, the conversation of my parents reminded me that I had been long a stranger at the board, for they talked only of persons and subjects about whom and which I had no longer any interest, while I sat silent, thinking of the dingy little parlour of my aunt, endeared to me by the recollection that Henry had often been in it, and that when I partook the repasts with her, I was always cheered by the hope of seeing him the next day, or day after; or, at all events, I had the consolation of knowing he was not far distant. How inconsistent are our notions, Mr. Richard! The home of my infancy now seemed more strange to me than the abode of my aunt; and, if the truth must be owned, I would have preferred supporting her ill-humour for sake of remaining near Henry, than finding myself, as at present, far

removed from him; and though with my parents, discovering by their conversation that they had got accustomed to my absence, and felt an interest in objects in which I no longer experienced any.

"Day after day, succeeded by weeks and months, passed away, but brought me no comfort: the hope I had indulged of hearing, if not from Henry, at least from his kind aunt, became fainter and fainter, and I truly felt how 'hope deferred maketh the heart sick,' when time passed slowly by without bringing me tidings from him so dear to me.

"The reproachful letter written by my father to my aunt remained unanswered, so that all ties with London now seemed broken; and the reflection that such was the case filled me with sadness. How often did it occur to me to write to Henry; but then came maidenly pride and modesty to whisper the impropriety and indelicacy of such a proceeding. No, as he wrote not, and, in all human probability, thought not of me, sooner would I let my heart break than address him; and that it would eventually break I entertained little doubt, as what maiden, in similar circumstances, under twenty, ever does? and as my cheek grew paler and my appetite

failed, I used to think, that cold-hearted and faithless as his silence proved him to be, how would his conscience reprove him whenever he should learn that I was laid in my grave? I used to dwell for hours on this thought. I even selected a sunny spot in the churchyard, near a beautiful willow-tree, where I wished to be buried; and I determined, that when death was approaching, I would write a last farewell to him, and entreat him to visit my grave.

"In the twilight hour, as I sate alone in my little chamber, tears would chase each other down my cheeks, as I recalled to mind his looks, and words, and the soft tones of his voice; and I felt that *his* tears too would flow, whenever he came to look on the spot where I was laid, and that he would mourn for having neglected one who loved him so well, until the thought of his sorrow melted me; and then I would resolve not to let him know my fate, lest it should render him too unhappy. I, who had then never read a novel in my life, had, strange to say, precisely the same feelings and fancies that I have since found in such books, which makes me think that all young girls in love have similar ones, which renders novel-writing an easier task to women than to men. Though I met kindness

and affection from my family, I experienced little or no sympathy. My father, wholly engrossed by his little farm, which occupied him all day, seldom saw me, except during meals, when he only remarked, 'that the girl had lost her appetite; and no wonder, from having been so long shut up in London.'

"And my mother, who was busied from morning till night with her dairy, poultry-yard and household concerns, seemed unconscious that aught more than a delicacy of health, brought on by 'the bad air of that smoky place Lunnon, and which would soon pass away, now that I was come home,' was the matter. Anxious to conceal my depression of spirits, I used to exert myself to the utmost, in order to assist my mother in her daily occupations; but my heart was not in the task, and she used often to remark, 'Well, child, how strange it is, you don't go about your work at all as you used to do before you went up to Lunnon; you, that would set about it, formerly, as brisk as a bee, I warrant me, and would carol like a bird all the time that the hands were as busy as ants.'

"My sister Sarah had no time or thought for any one except her husband and child; and

when my altered looks were remarked in her presence, always said,—

"'Ah! wait till she has a good husband like mine, and a sweet beautiful baby like this,' holding up her little one, 'and she'll do well enough, that she will. Why, Lord love ye! *I* used to be as dull and moping as she is, before I was married; but ever since, I have not had time to think of any thing but how happy I am, —busy all day long with keeping my house neat and tidy, and nursing this precious little darling. Ay, get married, sister; that's the way to be happy, for women are of no use, except to look after husbands and children.'

"My sister Betsy we seldom saw, and when we did, her presence afforded little gratification. Her whole thoughts seemed to be engrossed by the coarse and unwomanly pleasure of eating; and her conversation continually turned to the subject of savoury dishes, and the best mode of concocting them, on which she dwelt with an unction that, to use her own phrase, made her mouth water.

"'How strange it is, Lucy,' she would sometimes say to me, 'that after being so long in Lunnon, you have not brought home a single recipe for making a good dish. I wonder you

left town without bringing a cookery-book with you,—it would have been a great comfort to me, who am so fond of trying my hand at new dishes. Had aunt nothing new or remarkable at her table, in the way of cookery? Well, for my part, I can't see the good of people going up to Lunnon, except it to be to bring down some new inventions in the eating line. I must be off, for we have the finest and fattest goose to-day for dinner, that I've seen this year. I stuffed it myself, before I came out, with plenty of sage and onions, and it smelt so savoury, that the thoughts of it makes me hungry.' This is a specimen of the general conversation of my sister; judge then if her visits could be any pleasure to me.

"I sometimes wondered that I heard not from Anna, who was so attached to me, and who so deeply regretted my departure from London. She knew my address, and judging from our conversation relative to the wall-flower, more than suspected the anxiety I would feel to hear what had been said by Henry and his aunt, when she took back that cherished gift to them. Alas! I was ignorant of an insurmountable obstacle to the poor girl's addressing me, which was, that she could neither read nor

write, and so attributed to forgetfulness, that which necessity compelled.

"My Bible now became my sole consolation. Every moment that I could snatch from my household cares was devoted to its perusal, and by degrees, I found a calm resignation take the place of the fretfulness and impatience to which I had previously given way. No tongue can utter—no pen describe, the soothing effect of that blessed book on my mind! It is true, Dame Parsons, and other neighbours of ours, sometimes disturbed my tranquillity by their idle questions, dictated by a prying curiosity, with which they assailed me whenever we met.

"'So, Lucy, here you are back again with us. Why did you leave Lunnon? and who has your aunt got to take care of her now?' would Dame Parsons say.—'I warrant me the old lady must miss you, after being used to you, pretty near two years,' would another observe; while a third would inquire when I had heard from my aunt, and when I intended to return to her?'

"These questions, so often repeated, I confess used to vex and mortify me; and I, not having sense enough to conceal it, betrayed the annoyance I felt, and so confirmed the evil suspicions to which my unexpected return to my

parents had given rise. Various were the reports circulated through the village, as to the probable cause of my quitting my aunt, and all of them, as we soon learned, were any thing but charitable towards me. Let not people imagine that the unsophisticated inhabitants of a rustic village, are more free from the propensity to scandal, than are those of cities, or less prone to credit, and circulate injurious surmises and aspersions. On the contrary, I really think they are even more addicted to scandal, probably because they have fewer subjects to occupy their attention. I used to weep bitter tears, when some gossipping neighbour, professing friendly motives, would come, and repeat to my mother the tales circulated about relative to me. That those among whom I had been born and bred, and whom I had never wilfully offended, should take a pleasure in defaming me, grieved me so severely, that the consciousness of my own innocence failed to console me under these trials; but this knowledge of the falsehood of the reports to my disadvantage taught me to extend that charity towards others, denied to me, and rendered me ever after incredulous to the evil reports spread against persons similarly accused or suspected.

"Months passed away, but brought me no tidings of Henry, or Mrs. Elrington. My aunt never having noticed the reproachful letter addressed to her by my father, I now ceased to indulge my hopes of ever hearing from or seeing Henry again.

"Winter had now set in, with its cold and cheerless days, and long dull evenings, during which, time seemed to creep with feet of lead, and my spirits became even more damped than before; when one day, a week before Christmas, when the snow covered the ground, and the sleet was driven against the windows, I was throwing a few crumbs to the poor robin red-breasts that sought shelter on the window-sill, when I saw a stranger open the garden-gate, and approach rapidly towards the house. He was so enveloped in a large cloak, that muffled him up to his chin, that not only his figure, but a portion of his face was concealed, yet at one glance, I recognized him to be Henry. I uttered a faint cry, and sank breathless on a chair, my heart throbbing so wildly, as to deny me the power of speech, and to prevent me from flying to open the door, to give the welcome visitor admittance. My mother, who heard the knock, was the first to answer the summons,

and in reply to Henry's inquiries for me, led him into the little parlour where I was seated.

"To describe our meeting would be impossible; my joy and agitation too well revealed the secret of my heart; and his, satisfied my mother that her child had not loved in vain, as she had lately began to think.

"When the emotion into which we had both been thrown by our meeting had subsided, Henry took from his pocket a letter addressed to my father, and handed me one from his aunt.

"'This,' said he, pointing to the first, 'was given to me by Mrs. Appleshaw, whom I left in good health, and whom I have latterly seen frequently.'

"'How!' exclaimed I, in undisguised surprise, 'is it possible that my aunt has become reconciled to you?'

"'Yes, perfectly,' answered he; 'but the letter from her, of which I am the bearer, will explain everything.'

"'How long has this reconciliation taken place?' asked I.

"'Only a short time, or I should have sooner taken advantage of it, to hurry down to Butter-

muth, though but for a few hours, as it is only at Christmas and Easter that we are permitted to be absent from our office in the city.'

"My father entered while Henry was speaking, and stared not a little at seeing a stranger seated so familiarly at his fire-side.

"'This, my dear,' said my mother, 'is the young man from Lunnon that Lucy told us about.'

"'Yes, father, this is Henry,' whispered I.

"'And right glad I am to see you down here,' said my father, holding out his hand cordially, and seizing that of Henry; 'and there is some one else here, who is even more glad to see you, my lad, than I am,' and he looked archly in my face, and smiled and nodded, while I felt my cheeks grow as red as a rose. 'Sit you down, my boy, sit you down,' continued my father. 'What! old wife, have you not had the gumption to offer him a glass of warm elder-wine and a hot toast in it, such a bitter cold day as this, and after his journey? Hang it all! the women never think of the creature comforts, when there is a bit of love in the case; but I'll warrant me, the young man won't be sorry to get som'at to stay his stomach till our meal be ready,—and hark you, my dear, let a good fat

fowl be put to the fire without delay, for I have heard that these Lunnuners be cruel fond of country-fed poultry. And where's your portmanty, my lad?'

" 'I left it at the inn,' said Henry.

" 'And more shame for you! Send off Bill Thompson directly for it, dame; and let us make our young friend feel at home. Will that elder-wine never be warm?—ah! here it comes at last. Fill up a tumbler for the lad, Lucy, and let us drink to our better acquaintance.'

" 'I've brought a letter for you, sir, from Mrs. Appleshaw.'

" 'You have, have you? and what can she write to *me* for? She behaved cruel ill to my child, that's what she did; and here has my poor Lucy, who used to be as blithe as a lark, been moping and crying at the spiteful tales invented by some of our gossipping neighbours, and all because the poor girl was packed off, without rhyme or reason, or due notice to prepare us for her return, and so prevent the gossips from being surprised by it, and making it an excuse for their surmises. 'Twas bad enough for poor Lucy to be sent away from the young man she liked——'

" 'O, father!' exclaimed I, blushing to my very temples.

" 'Yes, I *say liked*,' resumed my father. Why should you be ashamed of my speaking the truth, girl? Didn't I, and your mother, too, see as plain as could be, that your pale face and heavy sighs,—ay, and your red eyes into the bargain, wasn't because you had left your aunt, or that the ill-natured folk in the village invented lies about you?'

" 'Pray, father,' interrupted I; but Henry gave me a look so full of gratitude and affection, that I had not the courage to contradict my father's assertion.

" 'The lad behaved fair and above board, girl—that he did. He proposed openly and honestly for you through his aunt to yours, and if Dame Appleshaw hadn't been a greater fool than I took her to be, she'd have said yes instead of no, and you'd have been married some months ago, instead of being fretting and moping as you have been.'

" Another look full of love from Henry, consoled me for the shame I experienced at my father's disclosure of my feelings, and my lover, to save me from further embarrassment, drew his attention to the letter of my aunt.

" 'Mrs. Appleshaw,' said he, 'did not formerly know me as well as she has since done; but she now renders me justice, and fully approves of me as a husband for her niece, provided you, sir, and her mother have no objection.'

" 'Who cares a fig whether she approves or not!' exclaimed my father, angrily. '*I* approve, my wife approves, and as for the girl herself, man, I verily believe whether we did or not, *she* would continue to like you just the same. Take her, young man, and with her our blessing. I haven't got much else to give her; but a couple of hundred pounds shall be paid you on the wedding-day, and though a small fortune, it is better than nothing.'

" Henry seized my father's hand, which he shook heartily, kissed my mother's cheek, and then timidly approached to take my hand.

" 'Give her a buss, man,' said my father, and then for the first time my lips were pressed by those of any man, except my father.

" How rapidly flew the hours during that happy day! Even now, though age has chilled the heart then so warm, I feel that the remembrance of that blessed time can make it beat quicker; and now, in my old age, I thank God

that I have shared the love, and helped to make the happiness of an honest and worthy man.

"I did not find time to read the letter of Mrs. Elrington until night, but what need had I for any addition to my joy? Was not Henry there, seated by my side, by a cheerful hearth, our affection sanctioned by my parents, who, gazing fondly on us both, were almost as happy as ourselves? Before we parted for the night, my father read aloud the letter of my aunt, the contents of which were as follows:—

"'My dear brother-in-law,—Henry Chatterton will be the bearer of this letter, and takes with it my hearty, good wishes, that you and my sister will reward his kindness to me, by bestowing on him the hand of Lucy, of which he has proved himself most worthy.'

"'Whew!' said my father, screwing his lips into a whistle, as he was wont to do when aught surprised him. 'What's in the wind now? So, it is only because he has been kind to *her* that he is to get our girl! Just like her, selfish to the last. But what can he have done to change her so?'

"'Nothing more than any one else would have done in my place,' replied Henry, mo-

destly; 'but Mrs. Appleshaw overrates the little service I was able to render her.'

"'Then she must be greatly changed, indeed,' observed my father; 'for I never knew her to overrate any kindness or service rendered her before.'

"'Pray don't be ill-natured,' said my mother, who always pleaded for her sister.

"'Have you played in the funds for her, and doubled her fortune?—have you said amen to all she thought right?—and have you proved to her, either that you will outlive my daughter, and so preclude the necessity of a large marriage settlement, or that you can make one?' asked my father; 'for I know no other means by which you could get her to write in your favour.'

"'I have done none of these things,' replied Henry, smiling.

"And my mother, gently chiding her husband, made him resume the perusal of his letter.

"'I was on the eve of beggary, when this excellent young man discovered the approaching ruin of the house in which my property was lodged; apprized me of it, and enabled me to withdraw my money three days before the holder

became insolvent. Without his zeal, activity, and knowledge of business, I should never have been enabled to recover my money before the failure of the house in question, nor could I have procured such advantageous terms for it as I now have done; for, when alarmed at the possibility of future risk, I determined on sinking the whole of what I possess in an annuity for my life, which, at my advanced age, will give me a much better income than I formerly enjoyed, Mr. Henry Chatterton managed the whole affair for me.'

"'Just like her!' exclaimed my father; 'selfish to the last; never thinking of any one but herself, and sinking all to increase a larger income than she requires, and when she knows she can have so short a time to receive it: thus depriving herself of the power of leaving a guinea to those who are to come after her.'

"My mother raised her hands and eyes, and looked the sadness she did not express; for this news was a painful surprise to her, from having always calculated that her children would, at her sister's death, benefit by it.

"'And so you only won the old woman's good will by helping her to cheat her nieces out of their expectations?' said my father.

'Well, I can't be angry with you, for it proves you are not a covetous person; but, hang me! if ever I'll forgive her for showing she has so little liking to my children, after my having always been so kind a brother-in-law to her.'

"'My salary being now raised to one hundred and fifty pounds a-year,' said Henry; 'which, with prudence and good management, will enable me to support a wife comfortably, I have no fear for the future, and had no wish to influence Mrs. Appleshaw in the disposal of her property. Blessed with the possession of this dear girl,' and he took my hand, 'I have nothing left to desire; nor did I look for the fortune you are so kind and generous as to say you will bestow upon her, and which, if at all inconvenient to you, I will readily resign.'

"'You are a generous, noble-minded fellow,' said my father, shaking him by the hand, 'and if I had three times as much, it should be equally divided between Lucy and her sisters.'

"The letter from Mrs. Elrington was filled with the kindest expressions and good wishes. She told me, that from our first acquaintance, she desired that I should become the wife of her nephew, but, that being so unkindly treated by my aunt when she made the proposal, her

pride had been so hurt, that she had discouraged Henry from addressing me or my parents, especially as I had never written a line to her, which she fully expected I would do. It was only on my aunt's lately acknowledging to Henry that she believed I entertained an attachment to him, which was the cause of her sending me back to my family, that she had sanctioned Henry's coming to propose for me; and she urged me not to trifle with his happiness, but to accept him at once, adding, that one who had proved himself so dutiful a son and nephew, could not fail to be an excellent husband.

"A present of a neat gown-piece from this kind woman, was taken out of Henry's portmanteau, and excited the admiration of my mother and our servant, both of whom declared they had never seen any thing so beautiful before. My sisters and their husbands were invited to come and dine with us the following day, and came in their best clothes; Sarah bringing the baby with them, its cap ornamented with a cockade of cherry-coloured ribbon, and its frock tied with the same. Betsy and her husband brought the two boys, who were as noisy as possible. My sisters' husbands, with

their coarse red faces and redder hands, looked quite clownish near Henry, who appeared so genteel, that I am sure Sarah could not help seeing the difference between the two men. She showed the child to Henry, and asked him 'whether he ever saw such a one in London?' while Betsy declared that her's were much finer, adding, 'she heard all the children in London were poor pale-faced things, as indeed, for the matter of that, so were the men and women too;' and she looked in his face, and then at me, in a way which almost made me angry, but I felt too happy to give way to ill-humour. When Betsy saw my new gown, she seemed quite jealous, and Sarah added, 'that for her part, she did not care about finery, nor would I when once I had a dear sweet baby like hers, which, however, she was afraid I never would have if I was obliged to live in Lunnun, where no one ever had fine children.' I felt both ashamed and angry that she should talk in this manner before Henry; but I had noticed soon after my return home, that she no longer experienced the same attachment towards me as formerly; and that all her affection and interest being centered in her husband, who was a very selfish man, and cared little about

wounding the feelings of others. My brothers-in-law talked only of farming, bad and good crops, and feeding cattle; and, seeing that Henry was ignorant on these subjects, seemed to consider him as an inferior being, which greatly mortified me. In short, neither the husbands nor the wives were disposed to show any regard to the man who was to be so soon their brother-in-law, and seemed displeased at the attention and kindness with which my father and mother treated him, while his behaviour towards them was polite and friendly, which I could see was all for my sake.

"Though the snow was deep on the ground, the sun sometimes shone out for a short time, and Henry and I would ramble out together. Oh! how happy we used to feel, when I would lead him to all my favourite walks; and, dreary and unlovely as the country looked with its leafless trees, he used to praise its beauty because I liked it, and had so often described it to him when we first began to love each other. He used to tell me how carefully he had preserved my poor wall-flower, how often he had kissed it, and what regret he felt that both his aunt and himself had been absent when Anna had brought it to their house. They had never after seen

her, although they wished it so much, in order to learn every particular relative to me. And unfortunately, their servant who saw Anna was deaf, so did not hear the message she left. He told me how he went Sunday after Sunday to the church my aunt attended, in the hope of seeing me, and how miserable he felt when she entered alone; yet still he thought I was left at home to prevent his seeing me, or that I was ill; and then he used to be wretched, and walk up and down before my aunt's house, thinking he might catch a glance of me at the windows. He did not know I had left London until he called on my aunt to inform her of the danger her property was in, and actually believed on entering the house, that I was still an inmate, and that he might be permitted to behold me. My aunt did not seem to believe his statement relative to the approaching ruin of the house in which her property was lodged, until he assured her, in the most solemn manner, of the fact; and though she employed him to extricate her money, it was only when the bankruptcy of the firm alluded to was announced in the gazette, that she felt the extent of her obligations to him. Then, and not till then, did she confess to him why, and where I was

gone, and sanction his visit to me; but she made it a condition that he should not leave London or write to me, until he had vested her money in an annuity for her life. This, and much more, did Henry tell me, interlarding his information with vows of the tenderest love, and so happy did I feel, that I scarcely wished to end those blissful days of courtship, though he was continually pressing me to name the day for our marriage. How proud used I to feel, as we walked arm-and-arm through the village, before the ill-natured gossips who had made such spiteful remarks on me, a short time before. The news of our approaching marriage proved the falsehood of all their reports, and they were forced to admit that there was not so genteel or handsome a young man in the whole place as Henry.

"Every thing being arranged, I was married ten days after Henry's arrival at Buttermuth, and his leave of absence having nearly expired, we set out for London the day after. What a happy journey that was, and how kind a welcome did we meet with from good Mrs. Elrington, who had prepared every thing for our reception. A small cottage with a little garden, at Brompton, had been taken for us, and

our kind aunt had made it so neat and pretty, that I could do nothing but admire it when I arrived. Henry pointed out to me a beautiful China flower-pot, into which the old one containing my poor wall-flower had been placed, for he would not suffer it to be transplanted lest it should be injured, and valued the original old flower-pot because it had been touched by me. Our aunt Elrington brought me the keys of the house the next morning, saying that *now* I was the mistress; but I returned them, telling her it would be my pride and pleasure to be her assistant in the household duties, and Henry pressed us both in his arms, while tears of joy started into the eyes of all three.

"'Did'nt I tell you, my dear child,' said our excellent aunt, 'even before you saw Lucy, that she was precisely the wife I should select for you, had I the choice of a hundred maidens?'

"'Yes, my dear aunt,' replied Henry, 'and did I not say that unless I fell in love, nothing would tempt me to marry?'

"'But *I* knew well enough you could'nt help loving Lucy.'

"'Yes, my good aunt, and you are dearer to me than ever, for making me acquainted with her.'

"'The day after our arrival, we thought it right to go and visit my aunt. We found her full of complaints of the trouble and annoyance entailed on her by the increased expenditure she had deemed it necessary to adopt ever since the addition to her income, obtained by the life annuity.

"With what feelings did I find myself again in that little parlour, in which I had so often thought of Henry, and grieved at our separation; and there was he, looking all happiness,—my friend, my husband—from whom nothing but death could now part me.

"'I hope you have insured your life for Lucy?' asked my aunt; 'there is no time to be lost in such affairs, I assure you; for I have known several men much more healthy-looking than you are, Mr. Henry, carried off suddenly, before they had time to make any provision for their wives; and now that I look attentively at you, I think I discover some symptoms that indicate a delicacy of the chest.'

"Henry, observing that I was terrified at this remark, could not forbear from smiling, as he assured my aunt that he never had a cough in his life; but she, regardless of this assertion, urged me in the most strenuous terms not to

allow him to postpone the insurance; 'for,' added she, 'let the worst happen, by adopting my advice you will be comfortable when he is gone.' The thoughts engendered in my mind by her words, brought tears to my eyes, and Henry, vexed at her annoying me, could hardly conceal his displeasure. I asked her leave to go and see my old chamber, which I felt a childish desire to visit.

"'Certainly, if you wish it,' answered she, 'but, for the life of me, I cannot imagine what pleasure you can find in going into a cold room, when you can stay here and enjoy a good fire?'

"'Pray let me accompany you, my own Lucy?' said Henry, 'I should so much like to see the room you occupied so long.'

"'There is nothing to see in it, I assure you,' observed my aunt, 'for the day after Lucy went away I had every thing taken out of it, in order that Anna, who I caught crying there when she ought to have been at her work, might not any longer have the silly excuse she gave me, of being made melancholy at looking at the bed Miss Lucy slept on, and her chair, and her table; which, though the sight of them made her cry, yet she liked to see, just as if there was

anything to make one weep in looking at such things.'

"Poor Anna followed Henry and I up stairs, and cordial and affectionate was her greeting to us.

"'Ah! Miss Lucy,—but I beg pardon, you are now Mrs. Chatterton,—how glad I am to see you again. And the poor wall-flower,—you remember it, ma'am,—I'm sure I took it myself the moment you left the house, well knowing how missis would throw it out of the window if she found it; but Mrs. Elrington and Mr. Henry were both out, and though I left a long message with the old woman who opened the door for me, I never heard any more of the poor flower. How sorry I was, Miss Lucy—Mrs. Chatterton I meant to say—that I was no scholar, for had I known how to write I would have written to them, ay, and to you too, for my mind was continually bent on you. Missis is more cross and discontented than ever, since she buys so much more of every thing than she used to do, for we can't eat half the provisions, and the rest spoils, and then she grows angry, and she says that all she wants is to spend every shilling on herself, and so not leave any thing behind her, except as much as will pay for her funeral. No one knows

what I suffer, Miss Lucy—Mrs. Chatterton I mean—but next month my apprenticeship will be up, and if you would have pity on me and take me into your service, I would work all day, ay, and all night too, if you required it, to show my gratitude.'

"We made poor Anna a present, and Henry promised to place her in the family of a relation of his, where she would be comfortable, for he knew that if he engaged her my aunt would consider herself ill-used by us. Cake and wine was pressed on us by my aunt when we descended.

"'Pray have some,' said she; 'don't spare it, for there is plenty more in the house. Now that my income is so much larger than formerly, I have a double quantity of things brought into the house, and not liking company, there is so much more than I can consume, that Anna gets more to eat than is good for her; so pray eat plenty of cake!'

"'Don't you think you would be more comfortable, ma'am, if you occasionally invited a few friends to dine or drink tea with you?' said Henry.

"'Not at all; quite the contrary; for people are so fond of contradicting and having their

own way, that I never feel as if I was the mistress of my own house when visitors are here; so I prefer being alone.'

"We took leave of my aunt, inviting her to visit us whenever she pleased; to which she answered, 'that she did not much like visiting. That going in an omnibus, among all sorts of people, was out of the question; a cab was a mode of conveyance unsafe and unpleasant; and as to hiring a coach, it was an expense that few visits were worth the trouble of incurring.'

"How closely I clung to the arm of Henry, and how happy did I feel that I belonged to him, as the door of my aunt's gloomy dwelling closed after us.

"'It is not good to live alone, my dear Lucy,' said he; 'you see one of the consequences: your poor aunt, for poor she is, even with her increased income, has so long thought only of self, that all society has now become irksome to her; and the addition to her fortune, instead of adding to her happiness, by giving her the power of assisting the less fortunate, only decreases her comfort, by inducing a useless expenditure, the fruits of which, she not being able to consume, are wasted, and the waste annoys her.' Those who are not so happy as to have

family ties, should form friendly relations with deserving people; for the heart, like the earth, runs to waste if allowed to remain uncultivated.'

"Well, Mr. Richard, the winter passed rapidly away, as time always does when happily spent, and spring began to manifest itself in the budding leaves of the trees in our little garden, and in the chirruping of the birds, that flocked to it to feast on the crumbs we scattered with lavish hands for their sustenance. Henry left his home every morning at half-past eight, and returned to it at six. How frequently used I to find myself looking at the clock and counting the hours that must elapse before that which would restore him to me. Yet those hours were not idly spent, for between attending to my household duties, working at my needle, and preparing some little dainty with which to surprise Henry at dinner, I never was unemployed. I felt that a wife could never too much exert herself to render his home a scene of comfort and happiness, to a husband whose days were spent in providing the means for her support, and who devoted himself cheerfully to his daily toil, while *she* was exempt from all labour, save the labour of love of rendering the home he had giver her a blissful one.

"Mrs. Elrington, the best and kindest of aunts, finding how anxious I was to learn all that she could teach, took a pleasure in showing me how to do every thing that her nephew liked; and I profited so well by her lessons, that 'in a short time,' she declared, 'I could make puddings, pies and cakes better than herself; and as to preparing Henry's favourite dishes, no cook,' she said, 'could surpass me.' The commendations of this excellent woman urged me to exertion, for which the praises of Henry rewarded me dearly. Our house was the abode of peace and love; and I felt that every little art or industry I could use to adorn it rendered it still more dear to him, whose daily toil was soothed by the happiness he found in it. I would rise with the lark to prepare his favourite cake for his breakfast, escort him a little way on his road to town, and give him, at parting, a nosegay from our own garden, that, as he used to tell me, was the envy of all the clerks in the office with him, its fragrance perfuming the whole room. When the hour approached for his return I would set out to encounter him, and we felt as much delight at meeting, after the separation of ten hours, as others do after as many weeks or months. We

used to work in our garden together in the evenings until it was dark, then enjoy our simple evening meal with increased relish from the pure air and exercise, and then Henry would read aloud some entertaining and good book, while his aunt and I were employed at needle-work till the hour of repose arrived, when, having joined in prayer, we sought our pillows. Those were happy days, and I trust in the Almighty I received such blessings with a grateful spirit. How often since, have I reflected on past happiness, and wondered how, having tasted it, I have been enabled to support the sad change that followed. But 'God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,' and *He* has taught me to bow to His holy will.

"I had not been above six months a wife when my poor aunt was found dead in her bed, without having betrayed any previous symptom of illness. This event was a great shock to me; and occurring when I was advanced in pregnancy, seriously affected my health. My mother, to whom would have devolved the furniture, china and linen of her sister, had there been sufficient money left to defray the funeral expenses, had a useless journey to London; for, my aunt having acted up to her selfish principle

of expending the whole of her income, and being on the eve of receiving the third quarter's payment of her annuity, which would have become due in a week after her decease, had only a trifling balance in the hands of her banker. Thus, for two quarter's income she had sunk the whole of her fortune, and not only left nothing to her relations, but was indebted to them for a portion of the expense of her interment.

"But, bless me, it is late! Time passes so fast when one is thinking of days gone by, that I had no notion it was bed-time. I hope I don't tire your patience out with my old story. Good night, good night."

CHAPTER VII.

THE cordiality of Mrs. Chatterton increased daily. She anticipated those little wants peculiar to a young man absent from female relatives; looked over my linen, repaired it when required, and prepared many palatable remedies for colds and headaches, which she would insist on my taking; and, in short, acted in every respect towards me as a parent. Her partiality induced the good will of Messrs. Murdoch and Burton, who, impressed with a high opinion of her, were disposed to think well of any one for whom she evinced a friendship. The junior clerks, Bingly, Thomas, and Wilson, were less liberally inclined. They attributed the respectful deference which the age and kindness of Mrs. Chatterton elicited from me, to a sordid and artful desire of ingra-

tiating myself in her favour, and never noticed any instance of our mutual good understanding, without exchanging sundry smiles and significant glances, of which I longed for an occasion to show my sense of resentment, without incurring the disapprobation of either my kind friend Mrs. Chatterton, or Messrs. Murdoch and Burton.

I had now got so accustomed to the routine of my daily duties in the banking-house, that the confinement ceased to be as irksome to me as at the commencement; and the zeal and attention with which I discharged them, secured to me the good opinion of the partners of the firm. Even John Stebbing, the porter, treated me with a degree of respect he was far from showing towards Messrs. Bingly, Thomas, or Wilson, to whom he often held me up as an example, saying, "Ay, Mr. Wallingford is something like what a young man of business should be. He never keeps any one up late at night to let him in, as some others do, a thing which if known to Messrs. Mortimer, Allison and Co., would draw down their just anger."— Though I occasionally heard from Percy Mortimer, his letters were no longer as confidential, or as long as formerly. Always kind, there was

a constraint and reserve in them that pained me, and it required all my reason to make me fully sensible that this was but in the natural course of events; as, thrown into the daily society of persons of his own station in life, and with similar habits and pursuits, it could not be expected that he should still retain the same warmth of feeling towards one whose prospects were so widely different, and whose destiny was to be in a sphere so far removed from his own. He sometimes referred to his associates, and named lords and baronets, with whom it appeared he passed a good deal of his time.

Shall I confess my weakness, it gave me many a pang to find that others had taken the place I once possessed in his regard, and something like jealousy would creep into my mind; but I allowed not the feeling to dwell there long; but, thankful for past friendship, I determined to merit future goodwill by ever retaining that attachment to the son of my benefactor, which had been so early implanted in my heart. My sister Margaret wrote to me frequently, and it gave me the utmost pleasure to mark the developement of her mind, and the progress she was making, nearly self-taught, in those branches of education, in the first ele-

ments of which I had instructed her. Mrs. Chatterton would listen with pleasure while I talked of Margaret; and when I purchased a few instructive books for her, would add some useful gift from herself, and send kind messages. My mother, in return, would send a *fat turkey* or a couple of fine fowls, an attention that not only gratified her for whom it was meant, but conciliated the goodwill of Messrs. Murdoch and Burton who partook of these rural dainties.

"Well, Richard," resumed Mrs. Chatterton the next evening, "we left off, I think, at my poor aunt's death, and arrival of my dear mother in London. The kind reception afforded to her by Mrs. Elrington and my husband, and the comfortable home in which she found me so happily settled, consoled her for the death of a sister, whose want of affection had many years been a source of pain to her. After spending several days with us, she returned to Buttermuth, highly satisfied with my lot, and blessing those who rendered it so happy. We took the faithful poor Anna into our service, and liked her not the less, that she betrayed a regret for the death of her late mistress that could hardly be expected, when the harshness and unkindness she had experienced at her

hands had been taken into consideration. Time passed so fleetly, that when the Sabbath reminded us that a week had glided by, it seemed as if not more than half that number of days had elapsed. The monotony of those peaceful and happy days, far from being considered dull or tiresome, lent them a charm. It was a continuous chain of pleasurable thoughts and feelings, unbroken by aught that could occasion pain; and, like a clear and gentle stream, rolled smoothly and calmly along. How delightful was it to sit round the cheerful fire, my husband reading aloud some instructive book, while I actively plied my needle in making preparations for the expected little stranger, every thought and anticipation of whom sent a thrill of inexpressible happiness through my breast. The interest too which our good aunt took in the habiliments, increased my attachment to her; her drawers and presses, long unopened, were now ransacked in search of laces and cambrick for years unused, that they might be converted into caps and robes for the infant; and when Henry would put one of the little caps, with its neat frills, on his finger, and wonder how diminutive a thing could contain the head of a human being, how I longed to see the dear

object for whom it was designed, and pictured to myself its little face, shrouded with its pretty lace borders. Our kind aunt, and Henry, were never tired of admiring the baby clothes, and praising my skill in their manufacture. Mrs. Elrington would hope that the child might be a boy, and like its father, while Henry would pray that it might be a girl, and like me. I see, even now, his bright eyes beaming with affection as he bent them on my face, and redoubled all those attentions so gratifying to a wife, who is about to be, for the first time, a mother.

"At length came the time of trial, and for some hours my life was in considerable danger. But it pleased the *Almighty* to spare me; and after being for some time reduced to a state of languor, as if between life and death, the first cry of my infant repaid me ten fold for all I had endured. Ah, what mother's heart ever forgot that cry! It touched a spring in mine that gushed forth with unutterable tenderness, and I sank into a deep sleep, to awaken in eight hours after to the blessed consciousness of being indeed a mother.

"Who can paint the delight of pressing the delicate velvet cheek of one's first-born, of hear-

ing its gentle breathing, or even its shrill cry! of looking at its fragile limbs and tiny features, in each of which the doting mother searches, and imagines that she finds a resemblance to those of an adored husband. Well do such joys repay her for weeks of suffering! But when her infant's lips first imbibe sustenance from her breast, how indescribably delicious are her sensations! Tears of rapture stole from my eyes, as I felt the milky stream impelled by the dear lips of the little being who nestled to my heart, and saw the looks of delight with which its father regarded us both. Every day was now fraught with a new interest, for each brought increased strength and beauty to my child. When its clear blue eyes would turn towards the candle, or sometimes fix, for a moment, on my face, I could not divest myself of the notion that they already could distinguish objects, and would almost smother it with my kisses. But when at length the dear babe would really notice those around him, and learned to know his father, and me, what words can do justice to my delight? Then came his smiles when played with, his attempts to articulate, followed some weeks after by his successful effort to say mam-ma, and pap-pa;

sounds dwelt on with a rapture known only to a mother's heart. Then the employment of his rosy dimpled fingers, which he would often twist in my ringlets, hide in my bosom; and, last of all, when he began to walk, and would rush into my extended arms, and crow with pride and pleasure at the achievement, how did my heart swell with rapture!

"My husband doted on the baby boy, and our good aunt lavished praises and kisses on him, as she taught him to clap hands when his father returned home, and to say, '*Papa is tun*,' for papa is come. I felt my happiness to be so great, that in the midst of its enjoyment I sometimes trembled lest some unforeseen event should occur to destroy it. I would look around on the objects so dear to my heart, and which constituted my felicity, until tears would start into my eyes, and I would retire to my chamber to prostrate myself before the Giver of these blessings, to beseech Him to grant me their continuance. Oh, yes! my happiness was too great to last, and so a vague and indiscribable presentiment often whispered to me.

"The first interruption to it, was the illness of our excellent aunt. Medical advice, and a

strict attention to the regime and medicines it prescribed, failed to restore her health; and, after the lapse of a few weeks, it became but too evident that we should lose from our little circle that worthy woman, whose affection and good sense, had so largely contributed to its happiness. She bore her sufferings with a patience that endeared her, if possible, still more to us all, speaking words of consolation to us until the last, and resigned her soul, offering up prayers for our happiness. Hers was, indeed, the death-bed of a Christian, soothed by the hopes held out to her by *Him* whose precepts she had followed, and whose promises disarmed even death of his terrors. How truly edifying was the scene that death-bed presented, and how often has the recollection of it since comforted me! Long did we miss that mild and cheerful face from our humble board,—long turn with a sigh from her vacant chair by the blazing hearth, whence we felt it would be like a sacrilege to remove it: and when the pleasant spring brought out the leaves and flowers, we failed not to remember with sadness, that she who once welcomed them with us, was gone for ever from this beautiful world; for so it still appeared to us, even though we had been taught

to know that in a brief time those fondly-loved may be snatched from us. The death of the old appears so natural an event, that though we may truly regret the loss, the sorrow is of a more gentle nature than when the young are taken from us. The memory of our good aunt was fondly cherished by us all. Her mild wisdom, and hopeful trust in Divine Providence, was often referred to; and, though gone from this earth, her spirit seemed still to linger with those who in life she had so fondly loved.

"Our little Henry grew in health and beauty, —each month gave him fresh strength—and so wrapt up were his father and I in the lovely little fellow, that we desired no other child to rival him in our affection. We kept up a regular, though not frequent, interchange of letters with our father and mother, who, now advancing far into the vale of years, urged us to pay them a visit, and Henry having obtained a fortnight's holiday at Easter, we set out for Buttermuth. With what pride and pleasure did I place my boy in the arms of his grandmother, and see his grandfather, with spectacles on nose, examine his limbs, while he proclaimed that they were as firm and as fat as if the child had never been out of the country. The little darling, too,

took an immediate fancy to the aged couple,—would climb on their knees, pat their faces with his fat hands, and hold up his rosy little mouth to them to be kissed.

"'You have indeed, my dear,' would my mother say, 'brought up the child well. Why he never cries for any thing, and always does what you or his father tell him: how different from your sister's children, who really are unbearable, everlastingly screaming for something or other.'

"My sisters, their husbands, and my little nephews and nieces, now four in number, came to welcome us to Buttermuth, and never did I encounter such noisy and troublesome little creatures. They spoilt one of my best gowns, by wiping their dirty fingers on it after daubing them with currant-jam, and screamed with anger when I reproved them, though in a gentle manner.

"'Don't cry, darling,' said their mother, 'you may wipe your fingers on my gown as much as you please, for I never wear any dress that can be spoiled. Indeed, I wonder how people who have children ever do, for it is so natural to the little dears to touch and pull every thing they see, that it would be cruel to prevent them.'

"'Don't you think, sister, that your little boy

looks very delicate?' observed my sister Betsy; 'I don't like that high forehead of his. There was poor Mrs. Johnson's little boy who died last year of water on the brain, and *he* had just such a forehead.'

"I turned in alarm to look on the beautiful brow of my child, for every thing alarms a fond mother; but its perfect form, often previously remarked, hushed my fears, while a smile on the lips of my husband betrayed his suspicion that there was more malice than kindness in the observation of my sister.

"'You should hear little Henry repeat his lessons and his catechism,' said my mother, proud of her little grandson's progress.

"'O! if you have been already setting down the poor child to lessons,' replied Betsy, addressing me, 'it is no wonder that he looks so unhealthy. Poor child! it is a pity, for he might have been as stout and hearty as mine are, if he had been brought up like them.'

"'How can you say he is unhealthy-looking?' asked my mother; 'I never saw a finer child.'

"'Why, look at his fairness,' answered my sister, 'it is not, it can't be wholesome; then his cheeks are pink, and pink cheeks, Nurse

Wilson says, are always a sign of consumption. There was Mrs. Tomkinson's daughter, that died of a decline last Christmas was a twelve-month, and don't you remember what a bright pink spot she always used to have on one of her cheeks?'

"Again I turned in terror to look on the face of my boy, and again I was reassured by the healthful bloom on his round and dimpled cheeks.

"'But Henry's complexion is not a spot,' said my mother, vexed at my sister's observations. 'Never have I seen a more healthy red and white well mixed together, and not at all like a spot.'

"'He is not at all like my boys,' replied my sister, 'only look at the difference!'

"'There is, indeed, a difference, for they are as brown as berries, from the sun,' replied my mother.

"'Ay! that's what I call a healthy look; that's how a boy *ought* to be,' answered my sister.

"When we sat down to dinner, each of her children at once demanded to be helped, and their demands not being attended to, they began to scream.

" 'Do let them have something to keep them quiet,' said their mother, 'or there will be no peace with them. Don't cry, Dick, my darling, and you shall have something so nice.'

" 'But I will cry, if I like it,' answered the rude urchin, and he set up a scream, which was quickly echoed by his brother and sister.

" 'There they go,' said their father; 'this is the music they regale me with every day at their meals. I'm sure I often wish I was deaf, to be saved from hearing their noise.'

" 'How can you be so cross and unjust?' replied my sister, 'when you know there are not better children in the whole parish of Buttermuth.'

" 'I know there are not more troublesome ones,' rejoined the husband.

" 'Ay, that's what I often tell my old woman,' said my father; 'there's no peace with them; always screaming for every thing they see, and tormenting every one about 'em.'

" 'It's easy to see,' observed my sister, looking spitefully at my boy, 'that new brooms sweep clean. The new grandchild has put my poor little ones out of favour; but never mind, they'll not thrive the worse for all the faults people find with them, and I wish other people's

children looked as healthy as they do—that's what I do.'

"We returned to our home, well pleased to find ourselves again beneath its peaceful roof, and all the better in point of health for our visit to the country. Months passed rapidly away. Our boy grew every day more interesting, and really made a surprising progress in his learning, considering that as yet he had no teachers save his father and I. Often would my husband hurry home, in order to give him a lesson before he went to bed, and as often would he compliment me on the intelligence and docility of the child. Henry was now able to accompany me in my walks to meet his father, and when he saw him at a distance, would bound joyfully to meet him, leaving me far behind.

"One fine evening that we set out on our usual walk, Henry perceiving his father approach, snatched his little hand from mine, and ran eagerly forward. I saw him running rapidly along, and felt all a mother's pride in the grace and agility of his movements, when on a sudden I heard a shriek, saw a number of persons run, and form a circle, through which the driver of a stage-coach was endeavouring to force his horses, while the people hemmed

them in on every side, uttering reproaches and execrations. A vague sense of terror filled my mind, and caused my heart to beat so violently, that I could hardly move; nevertheless I tried to advance, and struggled through the crowd now assembled around the coach, when,—oh! horror of horrors!—I beheld my boy, covered with blood, and clasped in the arms of his father. I saw no more, for I fell insensible on the road, and awoke not to consciousness until I found myself in bed in my own house, and my agonized husband watching over me.

"How dreadful was the return to consciousness! and with it the recollection of the appalling misfortune that had befallen me. My first burst of anguish was received on that fond and faithful breast that had so often pillowed my head, for my husband, clasping me in his arms, mingled his tears with mine, while whispering that we must now endeavour to console each other, and submit with resignation to the will of *Him*, who had thought fit to send us this heavy trial. I prayed to be let see my child; and though the few friendly neighbours, who had come to offer their aid to us in this time of trouble, tried to persuade me not to see him, Henry bore, rather than led me to the

little chamber where all that now remained to me of my precious boy was laid. O God! never shall I forget that sight! even now, after the lapse of many a long and weary year, it presents itself to my mind's eye as vividly as when these aged eyes beheld it.

"There, laid on his little white bed, bending over which I had so often watched and blessed his slumbers, was my late blooming child,—him, whom, only eight hours before, I had seen bounding in life and health by my side, now cold and lifeless, but still beautiful, even in death, the lovely face wearing the same calm and blessed expression, I had so frequently remarked in it when he slept. The tender hand of his agonized father, had removed from the hair and face every trace of the gory stream that covered them when I last beheld my child, and carefully concealed the mangled form from my view, leaving only the head revealed. The setting sun threw its bright rosy beams on that young, fair, and open brow, and on those round and dimpled cheeks, giving them a hue of life, and even tinged with red those now pale lips, so lately dyed with a rich crimson, that made them resemble a parted cherry,—those lips so often fondly pressed to mine, and which seldom

opened without uttering words of love. The casement opening into the little garden had not been closed, and the breath of evening came through it, waving the light curtains of his little bed, and stirring the soft, silken curls around his face. I could have believed that my darling only slept, and that a kiss of mine could, as it had often formerly done, awaken him, and I bent down and pressed my parched and burning lips on his cold and rigid ones; but the touch brought the conviction of the fearful truth at once to my mind, and, uttering a faint cry, I again found relief in insensibility. A burning fever followed the repeated fainting fits with which I had been seized, and for many days, my life was despaired of. During this malady, I was haunted by the scene I had witnessed, and even by still more appalling ones. Sometimes I saw my boy rushing along in all his wonted joyousness; and the next struggling, bleeding, and mutilated beneath the feet of horses. At others, I fancied that I saw a coach borne rapidly along by fiery steeds, and rushed forward to snatch my child out of their reach, but in the attempt me-thought I fell, and felt the wheels of the ponderous vehicle crush my brain, while the dying cries of my

boy inflicted still greater agony. It was my husband's hand that applied the cooling beverage to my burning lips, and supported my aching head during this long illness, and it was his voice that soothed my agony, even when unconscious of his presence. When reason again resumed her empire, how did I deplore the sad change that had taken place in my once happy home. No longer did the bright face of my child, or his dear lisping accents enliven it. I missed him every hour, and was sometimes almost doubtful of my own identity, when now no longer blessed with that dear object, that lent existence so great a charm. My husband, fearful that the sight of the little bed, playthings, or clothes, of our lost angel, would but serve to keep alive the unavailing grief into which I was plunged, had them all carefully removed and locked up, so that not a trace remained to remind me that I had been a mother. This absence of all connected with my lost darling, made me sometimes think that all the blissful hours enjoyed during his brief and spotless life, were but a happy dream from which I had now awakened, and increased, instead of mitigating my sorrow. I would, in such moments, endeavour to recal his image, his smiles, and his voice, to memory,

in order to prove to myself that I had not always been childless, and when I had brought back that adored face, now shrouded in the grave, and the tones of that sweet voice, now hushed for ever, the sense of my deprivation became so overwhelming, that I have prayed for forgetfulness.

"Alas! ungrateful as I was, I remembered not, that if the Almighty had taken one blessing from me, I was still rich in the possession of another,—that Henry, the husband of my choice, the father of our lost child, was still spared to me,—but it is one of the peculiarities of grief to lose the sense of what still remains of happiness, in regret for what is lost. I would sit whole days brooding over my sorrow, and indulging the most fantastic notions connected with it. If the rain poured in torrents against my casement, I would start with a shudder, at the thought that it was falling on *his* grave; and so much did this idea haunt me, that I urged Henry to have a marble monument erected over the grassy mound in which he was laid. I visited the spot continually, and when sure of not being overheard, or seen, would kneel down and kiss the icy marble, and

address the most endearing epithets to the cold, dull ear of death.

"My husband was now compelled to devote a more than ordinary time to the duties of his office, in order to make up for the days he had been kept away by our affliction, and my long and dangerous illness which followed it. When he returned late in the evening, he would assume a cheerfulness, that was, I afterwards ascertained, very foreign to the real state of his feelings, but which he put on in the vain hope of enlivening me; while I, absorbed in my selfish grief, inwardly reproached him for his want of sympathy with it, and for so soon becoming reconciled to the loss of the idolized object that occupied all my thoughts.

"One evening, when I had been more than usually depressed through the day, and my husband and I were about to sit down to our simple meal, I heard a noise in the room, over that in which we were, like the falling of somebody, and forgetful for the moment, I started up, and exclaimed, 'My boy has fallen and hurt himself, Henry,—Henry, my darling, come to mama!' At that moment my eyes fell on the face of his father, and never shall I

forget its expression! Pale as marble, there was a look of anguish in the countenance, that at one glance, revealed all that the doting father had suffered, and how great must have been the effort to conceal those sufferings from me! I rose, and threw myself into his arms, our tears mingled, and from that moment I endeavoured to console him, who had hitherto done violence to his own feelings, in order to soothe mine."

CHAPTER VIII.

"My sister Betsy and her husband came to London in some months after this time, to have a holiday, as she said, and see all the fine sights. Henry invited them to take up their abode with us, a proposal which was not accepted until an exact calculation had been made by them, as to whether it would be cheaper to take a lodging and pay for their board, or to have the daily expense of hackney coaches or the stage incurred for their excursions from our house. Having ascertained that the latter was the least expensive plan, they came to us; and before they were one day beneath our roof, made us heartily wish them safely back again at Buttermuth.

"'I did not bring any of my children with me.' said my sister; 'for I thought it would renew your grief to see what fine hearty crea-

tures they are. Besides, I was fearful they might meet with the same accident that happened to your poor little boy. Who'd have thought of his coming to such a death, kept tied, as he always was, to your apron string? but it's always the way, when children are cooped up like that, they are sure to run into mischief the moment they get loose. I never heard the particulars of how it happened; sister, pray tell me.'

"A burst of tears, that I could not repress, checked, for a moment, my sister's unfeeling inquiries; but they were soon renewed, nor did they cease until she had brought me into a paroxysm of grief.

"'Well, I did not expect to find you so little resigned,' resumed she, 'to the will of God. You ought to be glad; for, after all, it is for the better; for the poor little fellow was but a weak, sickly child after all; and had he lived, would have cost you a fortune in doctors' and apothecaries' bills. What have you done with his clothes? they can't be any use to you now; and I was thinking they would exactly fit my little William, who is only a year and a half younger than your Henry was, but who is quite as big, if not more so.'

" 'How strange your little dinners seem to us,' would my sister say, when we had, at great inconvenience to ourselves, and no little expense, changed our dinner hour, and provided what we considered a plentiful repast. 'Such small, lean legs of mutton and skimping pieces of beef, and only two miserable little dishes of vegetables. To us, who are accustomed to great joints of fat meat, and a profusion of garden stuff, it looks quite odd, and makes one much more hungry to see your dinners. It is lucky we did not bring any of the children; for, I assure you, any two of them would eat up all that is on this table in a jiffey. Why don't you have large fat geese or turkeys for dinner? or even fowls? We always have such a plenty, that we have only to send out to the farm-yard whenever we wish to have poultry for dinner. Well, for my part, I wouldn't live in Lunnon for the world; I'm sure I'd be starved downright. Then your house is so clean, it makes one feel quite uncomfortable; I'm always afraid of dirtying it: the bars of the grate look as bright as if there had never been a fire in it; the windows and the steps before the door are rubbed each morning, I see;—what a waste of time. Then you have a clean table-cloth every day,

which is a piece of extravagance in a place where washing is so dear.'

"But it would be an endless task to repeat one half of my sister's remarks on my humble abode and mode of living, always delivered with a self-complacent declaration of the infinite superiority of her own. There was no night of the week that she and her husband did not visit some one of the theatres, and unceremoniously demand that a hot meat supper should be prepared for their return.

"'I come back so peckish,' would she say; 'that unless I eat a good meal I cannot close my eyes all night.'

"'I do not know about the closing the eyes,' said her husband; 'but I'm sure I never heard any one snore as you do; supper or no supper, it's all the same, I can't get a wink of sleep for the noise you make.'

"'*Me* snore? well, that's a good one, to be sure; why, it's *you* that snore enough to awaken all the house.'

"At length, the visit of my sister and her husband drew to a close; but not until their innumerable wants, and indelicate avowals of them, had nearly exhausted my patience, and

considerably increased our quarter's bills to our trades-people.

"The day previous to their departure she asked me 'whether I had not observed the great change in my husband's appearance? He is in a galloping consumption, you may be sure,' said she; 'I saw it, and so did my master, the first day we came.'

"Seeing my face become pale with apprehension, she added, 'I dare say he may live some months; for, I have seen people linger a long time after the doctors had given them over: but, I think it my duty to warn you, in order that you may be prepared for the worst; and, after all, it is better, as he is consumptive, that he should be taken away while you are yet young enough to marry again, than that he should be left until you are grown an old woman; and now, that you will have no incumbrance, which is another piece of luck, you may get a husband well to do in the world. And I'd advise you, when all is over, to come down to Buttermuth, for there is Farmer Bolton, who is looking out for a wife to take care of his children, and he would make you an excellent husband. There's no use in crying, sister,' continued she, observ-

ing the tears she wrung from me; 'we must all be resigned to the will of Providence; and it's only flying in the face of God to be grieving at the trials it pleases *Him* to send.'

"Horror-struck by the terrible intelligence conveyed in the first part of her unfeeling discourse, I was scarcely conscious of all that followed it. I sat revolving on the possibility of my Henry's being indeed, as she represented him, doomed to an early death, without my having discovered any one of the fatal symptoms that, as she asserted, had struck her and her husband on their arrival. I recalled with terror any cough, however slight or temporary, with which he had been assailed since our marriage, and magnified it until I blamed my own blindness to that which had become evident to others, and worked myself into a state of misery and alarm, that I had much difficulty in concealing from my husband when he returned home. I gazed with breathless alarm on his face as he entered the room, and attributed the heightened colour occasioned by exercise to the fatal malady, which my unfeeling sister had persuaded me had marked him for an early death. Day by day I was haunted by apprehension for him. It was in vain that he assured me he was in

perfect health, and that to an unprejudiced eye every indication of it was visible in his appearance. I could not for many months conquer my fears; and when at length I began to be convinced that my alarm had been groundless, a letter from my sister renewed my fears, by reminding me that the insidious disease which she felt assured my husband was labouring under, often deceived not only the patient himself, but those around him; and, consequently, she advised me 'to prepare for the worst.'

"But even out of evil cometh good; for the anxiety into which I was thrown for months relative to Henry, did more towards lessening the grief occasioned by my child's death, than did all the reasoning of my friends, or my own prudent resolves on the subject. The dread of losing him filled every thought, and the love I felt for him the day we were united at the altar, was light in comparison with that which I experienced, when the fear of his being snatched from me presented itself. Woman must live in, and for another, otherwise she fulfils not her mission on earth; and though its fulfilment may entail ceaseless anxiety, and too often misery, yet only when discharging it can

she know happiness, for then does she administer to that of another.

"About this period we received intelligence of the sudden death of my sister Betsy's husband. The event was announced to me in the following letter from her:—

"'Who would have thought,' wrote she, 'that my poor John would have been snatched away, —he who was so stout and hearty—while your husband, who has certainly a consumption, is still alive? Never was he in better health than the day before I lost him. He ate a good supper,—for poor dear soul! he had an appetite that made me think he'd live to be a hundred, —of roast goose, stuffed with sage and onions, of which he was always very fond. I never saw him eat more, and then he had some toasted cheese, and drank some of our strongest home-brewed ale, not above a quart or so, and a couple of glasses of brandy to keep down the goose, as he said; and I heard him snoring and snorting like, as comfortable as possible, till I fell asleep, and when I awoke he was dead by my side. The doctor who attended the inquest, said his death was occasioned by eating and drinking too much at supper; but I'll never believe it, for I have seen him eat quite as much most

nights ever since we were married, and if it never hurt him before, why should it then? I miss him terribly, especially at meals, for it is so solitary to have no one to carve for one; but it's no use to grieve, and I have a good deal to do, and to think of; for, as he died without a will, I come in for my thirds, and so must stir myself to keep things straight. The children begin to be a great trouble to me, now that they have no father to give 'em a box on the ear, or a good blow across the shoulders, whenever they are more impudent than usual. You are a lucky woman to have no children, for the old saying, that "they are a certain plague, but a very uncertain comfort," is quite true. I already find it quite impossible to manage the boys, and suppose that I shall be compelled to marry again as soon as the year is up, in order to have some one to keep them in order, as well as to take care of the farm, where every thing seems to be at sixes and sevens. A poor lone woman is much to be pitied, and so says my neighbour, Farmer Thompson, of Sudly. You may remember him, for father and mother used to talk of his being a little wild. He has now sown his wild oats, as the saying is, and has been very steady of late. My poor husband used to say (God for-

give him for being so uncharitable!) that it was because he had no more money to spend that he became so steady; but I'm sure it was from seeing the folly of his past doings. He is a very personable man, and is very neighbourly to me.'

" 'I felt half offended when Henry, to whom I gave my sister's letter to read, began to smile at the portion of it that was relative to Farmer Thompson. 'You'll see, my dear,' said he, 'that when the year is up, nay probably before, your sister will marry her neighbour, and give her children a step-father, who will not only master them, but govern her too.'

" And so it actually turned out, even before the year was finished; and in less than three years after, Farmer Thompson ran away to America, after he had spent every shilling belonging to my poor sister and her children; and she and them were obliged to go and live with my father and mother, whose comfort and peace, the wild doings of the boys, and the repining of my sister, completely destroyed. My husband kindly apprenticed one of the boys, and my father did the same by the other, but both ran away from their masters; the one went to sea, and the other enlisted, and neither had been heard of. When Henry and I went

to Buttermuth to visit my father and mother the year before we lost them,--for they died within a couple of months of each other,—we found my sister much changed. She complained bitterly of Farmer Thompson.

"'If I could only hear of his death, it would make my mind easy and comfortable,' said she.

"'Why, what difference can it make to you?' observed my mother; 'he can't come back on account of his debts, therefore you will not be troubled with him any more, so it's the same as if he was dead!'

"'Not at all,' answered my sister, 'for if I was sure he was dead, I could marry again.'

"'Marry again!' ejaculated my mother; 'Heaven knows, you have had enough of marriage, I should think.'

"'Those who have been accustomed to have a husband and a house of their own, never can be comfortable in another person's house,' said my sister; 'and though Thompson was a bad husband, all men are not like him. Nor do I think that he would have been so bad, only for the way he was plagued with them two unruly boys of mine, who were enough to drive any man out of his wits. Their poor father, God forgive him, spoilt 'em so completely. He little

thought, poor man! what trouble they would be to whatever step-father I gave them, or he wouldn't have let 'em become so unruly; but people never think of what's to come, or if they did, they would be more reasonable, for sake of those that are to outlive them.' Henry stole a sly glance at me when he heard this speech, and I found it difficult to restrain myself from smiling.

" 'Well, the poor boys paid dearly for their unruly ways,' said my mother, 'for surely no poor creatures were ever more unkindly used than they were by their step-father. Why, they have ran away from home, and come here with their faces bearing the marks of his violence, many a time; and you told me, daughter, that you often quarrelled with that bad man for beating them so continually.'

" 'And more fool I,' answered my sister, 'for taking their parts, for that only caused ill-blood between me and my husband; who, if I had not interfered, would not have gone off to the public-house, as he used to do on such occasions, where he fell into bad company and renewed his old courses.'

" 'It was a pity you were so obstinate as to marry him against the advice of all your friends,'

remarked my mother, provoked into the observation by the unfeeling comments of my sister. 'We all knew well enough what a graceless chap he was, and what a bad husband he would be likely to make.'

" 'Well, it's my belief, that if I had not had such troublesome boys, Thompson would have made a very good husband, but their doings spoilt his temper; and it was all the fault of their poor father, God forgive him!' My mother shook her head and turned up her eyes, a common custom of hers when she dissented from the opinions of those she conversed with; and when talking to me on the subject a few days after, when we were alone, she told me that she dreaded the future destiny of my sister, as she plainly saw she was not yet corrected.

" 'She has the rage to be married,' added my mother, 'and in spite of the severe lesson she has received, would, if a widow to-morrow, marry the first worthless man who would ask her.'

" Soon after our visit to Buttermuth, my husband returned from his office one evening with a much more grave countenance than usual, for he ever entered his humble home with a serene aspect and fond words. He told me, that Messrs. Mortimer, Allison and Fins-

bury had proposed to him to proceed to the West Indies, for the arrangement of some commercial concerns of theirs of great importance, and which, owing to the sudden death of their agent there, required the immediate presence of some confidential person on the spot.

" 'I owe them too many favours,' said Henry, 'to decline complying with their wishes; but I confess, my dear Lucy, that the thought of leaving you for a couple of years is so heavy a trial that it unmans me.'

" 'But cannot I accompany you?' interrupted I eagerly.

" 'No,' replied my husband, 'it cannot be; for when I arrive in the West Indies I am not to be stationary, but must proceed to the different places where the firm of Mortimer, Allison and Finsbury have commercial transactions.'

"Bathed in tears, I fell on his shoulder, and wept long and bitterly; nor could he restrain his tears, while he endeavoured to reconcile me to what he considered it to be his duty to do. We passed nearly a sleepless night; and when at length I sank into slumber, my dreams were coloured by the sad thoughts that filled my waking hours. In ten days from the one in which Henry announced to me the offer that

had been made to him, he embarked for the West Indies, leaving me overwhelmed with a grief that neither my reason, nor the hope of his safe return, could mitigate. Dreadful was that parting! Even now I cannot dwell on it.

"When he was gone I wondered, and blamed myself for having consented to his departure. All the arguments and motives he had urged to reconcile me to the measure, seemed, now that he was no longer present to utter them, vague and dissatisfactory; and could I have but recalled him, never would I have permitted him to leave me. His departure seemed like a painful dream, but from which, alas! there was no awaking.

"The morning after he had sailed, when I awoke, I vainly put forth my hand in search of his. I burst into tears of anguish, when I remembered that two long and dreary years must elapse before I could again behold him to whose heart I had been so fondly pressed only the day before. And there was the pillow on which his dear head had reposed. Oh! how interminable appeared the time to be got over before it would again rest on it! I wished that I could sleep through the next two years, and only awaken to welcome *him* back, without

whom life would have no longer any attractions for me. Every object around me reminded me continually of my poor Henry;—the chair in which he used to sit, the table at which he wrote. How did my tears flow afresh, when I sat down to my solitary repasts, and saw his vacant seat! Then came the thought of how many tedious months must elapse before I could even hear from him? Days rolled on without rendering me more reconciled to his absence; and when the evening closed in, and that I endeavoured to beguile the tedious hours by working at my needle; how did I miss him who used to read aloud to me, and make me forget the flight of time.

"I found some consolation in reading works on the West Indies, and making myself acquainted with the manners and customs of those with whom he was to spend so many months; yet the thought of the vast distance that separated us was continually recurring to me; and the boundless sea, with its countless waves rising up between us, inspired me with a sense of dread not to be expressed. Did the wind blow a little louder than usual, I trembled with terror lest it boded a coming storm; and when the rain came pattering against my

casement, I thought that *he* might be exposed to it, and looked with sorrow at his vacant chair by the blazing hearth, so lately rendered cheerful by his presence.

"How strange and wayward are the imaginings of love. There were moments when I felt with bitterness that, surrounded by new and exciting objects of interest, Henry might either cease to think of me, or lose that relish for his home that had hitherto formed its chief blessing for me. My humble abode was as a temple dedicated to him. Every article it contained had been selected by him, and was endeared by a thousand fond recollections. Were it possible for me to forget him, those silent monitors would have recalled him to my memory, while *he* had *nought* but our Bible, a lock of my hair, and the sweet memory of the past, to remind him of me in that far and strange land to which every day was bearing him nearer. Yet there were hours in which our hearts must hold communion together, whatever might be the distance that divided us—the hours of prayer at morning and night, when we had been wont to offer up our supplications to the Divinity. The Sabbath too, when we attended the house of God, could never be

passed over without tender thoughts being mingled in our devotions.

"The consciousness of this sympathy was a consolation; and in the hours, and on the occasions I have named, my beloved husband, though separated from me by a vast distance, seemed almost present to me, so certain was I that he too was praying while I knelt. The thought of our early days of love came back to me with vividness. Our trials, our marriage, and the happy days that followed it, seemed present to me, as if they had only recently occurred; while, strange to say, it seemed as if Henry had been gone a whole year before half that period had elapsed, so long did the time of our separation seem. At length came a letter from him; and, oh! with what joy and transport did I receive it? How did my heart beat and my hands tremble as I broke the seal! And yet the reflection, that months had elapsed since this precious letter was written, damped my joy. I read it with streaming eyes, for the expressions of tenderness with which it was filled renewed afresh the bitter sense of our separation, and made the period fixed for our re-union seem more than ever remote. How many times was that precious letter read over! It was

placed in my bosom all day, and beneath my pillow at night, until another letter from the same dear hand arrived to replace it.

"My parents died about this time; my mother having only survived her old and faithful partner a few weeks. They bequeathed to me a couple of hundred pounds, and left to my sister Betsy, who had been wholly dependent on them, the farm and stock, with one hundred pounds in cash. My poor sister Sarah was in a dying state when they were removed from this life, and followed them shortly after; and she, having lost her only child some months before my father and mother, thought it right to leave the bulk of their fortune, not to the daughter they most loved, but to her who most required their aid.

"The loss of my parents and sister threw a deep gloom over my spirits, already so depressed by the absence of Henry; and while I was still mourning their deaths, a letter from Betsy reached me. She wrote, to say, that seven years having now elapsed since she last received any tidings from her unworthy husband, she had determined on considering him as dead, and on again entering the married state.

"'I am told,' wrote she, 'that when a hus-

band has been that number of years absent, without having been heard of, a wife is at liberty to marry again; and, having found a person likely to render me happy, I am decided on availing myself of the privilege of which I only lately became aware. The person I have chosen is Mr. Macgrowler, an Irish clergyman, lately arrived here, and one of the finest preachers in the world. I may well be proud of engaging the affections of such a man; and, though, like all great men, he has got his enemies, who have left no stone unturned to prevent me from marrying him, nothing shall dissuade me from becoming his wife. To show you how superior a man he is, I send you the following; which letter I received from him this morning:—

"'It's yourself that's a jewel of a woman; and lucky enough I consider myself to have come to Buttermuth to have found you. Yes, although it may be sinful to love any thing on earth as I love you, I hope to obtain pardon for this sin by leading you, like a lost lamb, to the fold from which you have so long strayed. Didn't I buffet Satan last night, when Doctor Snowgrass thried to bother me before my congregation? 'Are you in holy orthers?' says he.

'Am I not?' says I. 'I'd like to see the man that would deny it,' says I; and with that, didn't I draw myself up like a king, and look at him as if he was nothing?—'Misguided man!' says he: 'why have you left your church and your pastor? Have I not been a faithful shepherd to my flock?'—'Is it traiting Christians like sheep you'd be?' says I: 'but, faith! that same doesn't surprise me; for sure, don't ye devour 'em?' How that sly rogue, Tom Halcomb, winked and laughed, and Bill Jackson enjoyed the joke.—'Your language convinces me that you are not in holy orders,' says Doctor Snowgrass.—'Bethershin,'* says I; 'but there's many a one, and you have the proof of it before your eyes, that prefers praying in the open air with me, to being shut up in a close church with you: and as for the women, God bless them! I'd like to know which they prefer, you or me?' With that he walked off, seeing that he couldn't hold up against my arguments; and how could he, poor man? but that's neither here nor there. What I now write to you for is, to tell you, that the sooner you make up your mind to make me happy,—ay, and yourself too,—the better. You are, to all contents and purposes,

* Irish for "may be so."

laced from your former marriage vows; for, as your husband that was, has never had the politeness nor decency to write you a line, just to tell you whether he was alive or dead, during the last seven years, you are now free to marry again; and, if he came back the week after, to claim you, you might turn your back on him and laugh in his face. We understand the law tin times better in Ireland than the English do; so you may be sure of what I tell you. You say, that no clergyman here will marry us, you darlint of the world! but what's to hinder us from going to the next county and being married? And, indeed, for the matter of that, 'twill be more comfortable than being stared at by a parcel of fools, who, because they don't know the law, think you have no right to marry. Once you are the reverend Mrs. Macgrowler, you may laugh in your sleeve at the ignorant spalpeens. I'm coming to take a sociable bit of supper with you to-night—you jewel of a woman! Don't put yourself to any expense or throuble on account of that same. A roast goose, stuffed with potatoes and onions, will do very well; but, mind you don't forget what I tould you, about the manner of boiling the potatoes.'

"An attempt had been made to efface the next paragraph of Macgrowler's letter, but it had not succeeded, for a request for the loan of five pounds was still discernible. I lost not a moment in writing to my poor imprudent sister, to warn her against the folly and sin she was about to commit, and to assure her that she would render herself liable to an action for bigamy, if she persisted in carrying her project into effect; but, alas! my advice was disregarded, and a letter from an old friend of my father's soon after informed me, that my unfortunate sister, after having disposed of every thing she possessed, had left Buttermuth with Macgrowler, with the avowed intention of being married at the first place where they could get the ceremony performed.

"Ten days after this intelligence I was disagreeably surprised by the arrival of my sister and Macgrowler. They came in a hackney-coach, and I heard him coolly order the driver to bring in two large boxes from it.—'This, sister, is my husband,' said Betsy, pointing to Macgrowler, who approached with open arms to embrace me, but I drew back, and said, that I could not receive him as such, and must therefore request him to withdraw.

" 'Aragh! would you be for going between a woman and her lawful husband?' said he, looking at me with a face of the most unblushing impudence.

" 'I cannot, sister, consent to receive this man beneath my roof,' said I; 'and, however painful to my feelings it may be to say so, you cannot take up your abode here with him. Should you ever want a roof to shelter you, and that you forsake your sinful companionship, you will find me willing to comfort and console you.'

" 'Why, you surely can't be so inhospitable as to refuse to receive my wife and I for a few days?' said Macgrowler, assuming an artful leer, that increased my disgust for him.

" 'I am surprised, sister,' interrupted Betsy, 'that you can refuse to acknowledge my husband, when under this same roof you lodged my first husband and me when we visited London?'

" 'I refuse to receive this person, because I know he is *not* legally your husband,' replied I. My sister now got very angry; called me unkind, unnatural, and ungrateful; and Macgrowler, perceiving that I was not to be talked into receiving him as a guest, told me I ought

to be ashamed of myself for being so unnatural a sister.

"'Come away, Mrs. Macgrowler,' said he, 'and don't be after wasting your breath in talking to her. There's plenty of lodgings to be had in Lunnon. Hackney-coachman! hackney-coachman! come here man alive, and take back the boxes to the coach.'

"While this scene occurred, the garden-gate had been left open, and a beggar woman, with four half-naked children at her heels, and twins in her arms, had entered, and were now close to my door, imploring charity. No sooner had the poor woman heard the voice of Macgrowler, than rushing forward, she seized him by the arm, looked anxiously in his face, and bursting into a fit of tears, she exclaimed, throwing herself on her knees, 'Oh! then God in his mercy be thanked, for He has heard my prayers and granted them. Is'n't it my own Thomash that I have found at last? Down on your marrow-bones, childer, sure here's your father: praise be to *His* holy name that led me to this spot. Ah! cuishla-ma-chree! sure it's your own poor Judy that came over all the way across the say* to look for you; and here's the two *bucka leen*†

* Sea. † Fair Boys.

bawns that God sent me while you were away. Look at the crathurs! sure they're the living image of your own purty self, my own jewel of a husband. But you don't say a word to me,—nor so much as give me a kiss—nor look at the twins I've brought you, though sure any father might be proud of 'em! And now I see it, how finely dressed you are—arragh, Thomash! what's come to you, and where have you been so long?'

"'The woman is mad,' said Macgrowler, 'I never saw her before in all my born days.'

"'Never saw your own lawful wife, and the mother of your six living childer, and the two blessed angels that are in heaven!—Oh, Thomash, Thomash!—avourneen. Can you put this shame on your own poor Judy?' and the poor woman wept in agony.

"'Daddy, daddy,' said the two elder boys, who now fully recognized their father, and who rushed up to embrace him, while the little girls clung to their mother, and began to cry.

"'Come, my dear,' said Macgrowler, his face flushed to crimson, 'come away.'

"'Let go my husband, woman, and call away these troublesome brats,' said my sister.

"'*Your* husband! *your* husband!' repeated

the poor Irish woman, 'then God forgive you for telling such a story, and pardon *him* who stands by unmoved to hear it. Oh, Thomash O'Gallogher! is it mad or deceitful you are to deny your own lawful wife and childer, and in a foreign land!—the heart of me will break, that's what it will,—ogh hone! ogh hone!' and she sobbed in uncontrollable anguish.

"Macgrowler attempted to pass her, but she seized his knees with desperation with one hand, while with the other she clasped the twins to her bosom. Her cries, and those of the children, attracted a crowd around the door, among which were two policemen, who entered the house and demanded the cause of the disturbance?

"'Take up that nasty beggar and her brats,' said my sister, 'and send them to prison. This is the Reverend Mr. Macgrowler, the great preacher, and my husband.'

"'Yes,' said Macgrowler, 'I'm one of the clargy, and this lady is my wife.'

"'Don't believe him, gentlemen, don't believe him,' exclaimed the poor Irish woman. 'His name is Tom O'Gallogher, and he's my lawful husband and the father of these six poor children, and of two more that lie buried in the

churchyard of Killballyowen. Oh! little did I think that when we both knelt over their graves and shed our tears together, that he'd deny the mother that bore them;' and here her sobs impeded her utterance.

"It was evident that Macgrowler's better feelings were excited by this appeal; for his lip quivered, and his eyes became moistened, and I observed that he no longer tried to shake off the two sturdy, half-naked, but good-looking boys, that held the skirts of his coat, and kept crying 'Daddy, avourneen, daddy!'

"'Why don't you take up that troublesome mad woman, and free my husband from these dirty boys?' demanded my sister.

"'There's no occasion in life to hurt the poor woman or the children,' interposed Macgrowler, when he saw one of the policemen somewhat roughly endeavouring to force the woman to release himself from her grasp, while the other was pulling away the boys.

"'Here's my certificate, that I have kept in my bosom night and day ever since I left Killballyowen,' said the woman, drawing forth a small leather bag, in which was a certificate of her marriage, and a crooked sixpence with a hole in it.—'Arragh! look there, Thomash, the

last gift you ever gave me when you were going away to England for the harvest. Many is the time since then that these poor children and I have wanted the bit and the sup, but I'd never part with this crooked sixpence.'

"One of the policemen read the certificate aloud, and then asked the woman whether she knew any one in London that could identify her husband?'

" 'Sure, I never was in Lunnon in all my born days,' replied she. 'I came over from Ireland to look for my husband, when I could no longer bear the trouble that was breaking my heart, when all the other boys that went over for the harvest, came back, bringing their earnings to their families, and brought no news of him. I've been thrying to keep life and soul together, by earning a little at the hop-gathering, always hoping that I would see or hear of *him*, about whom I was thinking night and day, and was now on my way to Lunnon, though afraid to find myself and these poor crethurs in such an over-grown place. When I heard his voice (and the sound of it went through my dark heart like a flash of lightning, making it as bright as day) calling out 'hackney-coachman, hackney-coachman.' Hardened

as was Macgrowler, his countenance underwent many changes, as he listened to the artless statement of the poor woman.

" 'Is there no mark by which you could identify your husband?' asked one of the policemen, with a magisterial air.

" 'Fifty—fifty marks,' replied the woman. Would'nt I know the roguish eyes, and the pretty forehead, and the curly hair, and the laughing mouth, and the nate limbs of him, among a thousand?'

" 'I don't mean that,' said the policeman, 'but has he no particular mark?'

" 'Yes, to be sure he has—one of his teeth, at the right side of his mouth, is broken. It was a blow from Pat Droleghan, which knocked the dhudeen* he was smoking, against the tooth, and broke it, and mad enough I was when it happened!'

" 'Allow me to examine your teeth,' said the policeman.

" 'Certainly sir, certainly; with all the pleasure in life.'

" 'Why, the woman is right enough, *here* is a broken tooth!' exclaimed the policeman.

* A short pipe.

" 'O! yes, I broke it eating nuts,' said Macgrowler.

" 'And he has a large mole at the back of his neck, under his cravat,' said the woman, a piece of intelligence that brought a blush of crimson to the cheek of Macgrowler.

" 'Let me see your neck, sir,' asked the policeman.

" 'It is'n't very agreeable for a gentleman to be obliged to take off his neckcloth,' said Macgrowler, hesitating.

" 'But it is not very agreeable for a gentleman to be sent to Botany Bay for bigamy,' observed the policeman; 'so I advise you to show your neck at once.'

" No sooner had Macgrowler put his hand up to untie his cravat, than the woman stopped the movement, and turning to the policeman, demanded 'whether a man could really be transported for bigamy?'

" 'Certainly, nothing could save him,' answered he. She gave a deep sigh, her eyes became suffused with tears, and her lips quivered, as she earnestly gazed at Macgrowler.

" 'Now gentlemen,' said she, 'that I have looked again, and closely examined him (whom

I took to be my husband) more attentively, I find I was mistaken. I am sorry,' and her voice became choked by her deep emotion, 'that I have given so much trouble, but the gentleman need not take off his cravat, I am convinced he's not my husband.'

"The effort was too much for the poor creature, and she fell fainting at the feet of *him*, for whose safety she had resigned her rights. The children began crying, and kissing their poor mother, whose temples I chafed with cold water, while the twins were placed on a sofa.

"Macgrowler, no longer able to control his feelings, tore himself from the grasp of my sister, who endeavoured, but in vain, to restrain him, rushed forward, and threw himself on his knees by the side of the fainting woman, whom he pressed with frantic fondness to his heart, exclaiming, 'Judy, O! my own dear Judy, have I killed you by my cruelty? Is'n't it myself that's a baste to deny my own lawful wife, and pretend never to have seen her before? Arragh! come to yourself, ma vourneen,* my darlint, and I'll declare in the face of all the world, that it's yourself that's my only true and rightful wife.' The poor Irish woman opened her eyes,

* My dear.

and fixed them, for a moment, with a glance of unutterable tenderness on the face of her husband. She then put her hand to her brow, as if to recall her bewildered thoughts, and after a moment's reflection, turned to the policemen and said—

"'Gentlemen, don't believe what he says; he's mistaken, indeed he is, and doesn't know what he says. That lady there,' pointing to my sister,' is his wife 'sure its easily seen, for look how well dressed both he and she are, while I'm only a poor crethur, that being light-headed from fatigue and sorrow, made a grate mistake, and have given a terrible sight of trouble, for which I ax pardon.'

"'Judy, my own darlint Judy! its no use to deny the truth; if the gallows was before me, and I richly desarve it, I'd never again be such a wild baste as to deny you. *You* are my wife, my thrue and only wife; and if you'll forgive me this time, I'll never lave you again while I live.'

"'Then you acknowledge that you have committed bigamy?' said one of the policemen. 'You are also his wife, ma'am, are you not?' continued the man, turning to my sister.

"'To be sure I am,' answered she, looking very much confused.

"'I told you so,—gentlemen, I told you so,' said the poor Irish woman.

"'He's *my* husband, and must come with me,' said my sister.

"'Divil a foot, Mrs. Macgrowler; and for the matter of that, you know right well, that though the banns have been three times called, I have always put off the ceremony; for, bad as I am, my conscience tould me it would be a shame to take you in.'

"'Oh! you vile shocking man,' exclaimed my sister, bursting into a fit of hysterical weeping. 'But I'll have the law against you, that's what I'll do.'

"'Sure, if I *had* married you, you might do that same; but as I have not, and as you can't say that I have not behaved civil and genteel to you all the time, it's not over decent in you to show your teeth when you can't bite. And now, Judy, ma vourneen, before all this genteel company, I'll tell you the truth. When I was thinking of going back to Ireland with my earnings after the harvest sure I got the typhus faver, and while I was down in it and out of my mind, the bad people about me took every farthing I had in the world. A field-preacher, who I met by chance, took pity on me. His name

was Macgrowler, and he had a great character for fine preaching. Well, he assisted me, and behaved very charitable, but he caught the faver from me, and it carried him off. As we were both strangers in the little village where he died, sure a thought came into my head, and I tould the people he was my uncle; and after giving him a dacent wake, and burying him genteelly, I took possession of his clothes and his watch, and a couple of pounds that was left after all expences were paid. And then it came into my head, that as I had taken every thing belonging to him, I'd take his name and turn preacher myself. There's nothing easier in life than to turn field-preacher, for a man has only to get up on a table, and threaten all the people with the divil; and throw up one's arms and get into a passion, and they'll sware he's a wonderful preacher. Well, I tried my hand in two or three little villages and had great success; that is, the people flocked round me and listened, and said it was a fine discourse; but the money came very slowly, and I thought to myself, sure, if things go on this way, I'll be a long time before I can make up a purse to take back to my poor Judy and our childer.'

" 'Sure you were always good, cuishla-ma-

chree,' interrupted Judy, quite forgetting his recent deception, and looking at him with eyes beaming with affection.

"'Well, then, I came to Buttermuth, and I begun preaching, and sure enough I soon got a large congregation, for all the idle boys and girls and crowds of women came to hear me. The women are mighty fond of field preachers, and especially if they frighten 'em about Satin.* I got invitations from many of 'em to dine and sup with 'em; and faith! mighty good males they gave me, but none of 'em was so sweet on me as this lady here. She was never satisfied but when I was at her house, and she tould me how happy she would be if she had a clergyman like me for a husband; and how she had a good matter of money, and could by selling her stock and furniture, and the interest in her farm get a good round sum more. And, then, she used to say I was such an elegant preacher, and beat the reverend Dr. Snowgrass all to nothing, which plased me grately. All this put the notion into my head, that if I could marry her under my false name and got hould of half her money, I would be off for ould Ireland the minute I left the church door, and make my poor Judy and the childer rich for life.'

* Satan.

" 'Good luck to you, my dear Thomash, for thinking of us!' exclaimed Judy.

" 'Thinking of you, ma vourneen dheelish! Sure then it's the rale love I bore *you*, that put it into my head to decave this lady. But she can't say I ever took the laste advantage of her, except persuading her, that as her husband was seven years away without writing to her, she might marry again. And when the business come to the point, I couldn't for the life of me bring myself to marry her, but put it off from day to day; and here she is, as innocent of any harm from me as the day I first clapped my two good-looking eyes on her, and she has lost nothing except one five-pound note which she lent me, and which I sint off to Killballyowen the same day to my poor Judy.'

" 'Ogh! then 'tis yourself that's the moral of a rale good husband,' murmured Judy.

" 'You are a wicked deceiver, that's what you are!' sobbed my sister, 'and you have made me spend ever so much money in feasting you in different public-houses.'

" 'Is it me, you crethur of the world? It's no such thing; for I often tould you, that I'd rather have a good dish of potatoes and a rasher of bacon, with a bottle of the mountain dew,

the true Inishowen, than all them dainties you were so fond of. Wasn't it yourself that was always ordhering fat pullets, and geese, and ducks, and porther, and strong ale, in spite of all my good advice; and faith! to tell the truth, you ate and drank more of 'em than ever I did.'

"'You vile ungrateful man! I'm only sorry that you had not married me, that I might punish you for bigamy,' said my sister, still weeping.

"'God forgive you, ma'am, for such a wicked wish; for sure, instead of being angry at having escaped the sin into which you might have tumbled had Thomash married you, you ought to thank God, ay, be my troth, and Thomash too, that you're free from sin, though not free from folly; for sure it was not sinsible, no, nor decent either, to lave your home and kin with a stranger, and go thravelling around the country without being married.'

"There was so much good sense in this reproof, that all who were present, except the person to whom it was directed, acknowledged its justice; and I, greatly interested in favour of the poor Irish woman, presented her with a couple of guineas, for which she was most

grateful, and then advised her and her husband to depart. They took leave, offering me many thanks and blessings; but before they left the house, Judy expressed her conviction, that what was faulty in the conduct of her husband, originated solely in his affection for her and 'the childer;' though, as she said, those who did not know his good heart as well as she did, might not think he had taken the best mode of showing it, in intending to marry another woman.

"Imprudent and absurd as had been the conduct of my sister, I could not but pity the humiliating position in which she was now placed; and yet I confess, I felt no desire that a person whose habits and tastes were so wholly opposed to mine, should take up her abode beneath my roof. It is a great trial for a sister to be compelled to renounce all companionship with one so nearly allied by the ties of kindred; one who has been cradled in infancy in the same arms, who has slumbered on the same pillow, who has shared the same innocent sports, and the same childish sorrows. The memory of those days of infancy and girlhood come back to reproach me for the alienation of which I felt conscious, but of which good

sense dictated the necessity. These tender reminiscences of the past pleaded in my heart against the whispers of judgment and experience, and induced me to speak words of consolation to my sister, who still continued to weep.

" 'It's no use to preach to me after this fashion,' said she; 'it's easy to talk, but hard to practice; and any woman, who has feeling, would find it hard to live alone, without a husband to carve a joint of meat for one, or to help to blow up the servants when they require it. But I am very peckish—fretting always makes me hungry; so, the sooner you have dinner the better. I should like to have a beef-steak with some fried onions, and a bit of Cheshire cheese after; and, mind you don't forget to order some treble-X ale.'

" I was hardly less surprised than disgusted at the free and easy style in which my sister issued her orders, while yet weeping over her disappointed matrimonial hopes and projects; but I, nevertheless, sent out for the articles she wished for.

" When she ascended to the room prepared to receive her, her first exclamation, on entering it was, 'Well, this chamber is precisely as it was when my poor dear first husband shared

it with me. And there, I vow, is the same little table, on which he used to place a glass of brandy and water, to be ready, in case I felt thirsty in the night. 'He had many good points, poor man! was an excellent carver, which is an essential thing in a husband; and could brew the best punch I ever tasted. He was a great loss to me; and all I have to reproach his memory with is, the having spoilt his children so much, that their doings destroyed my happiness with my second husband; compelled him to seek pleasure at the public-house instead of being comfortable at home with me; and, in the end, drove him out of the country, leaving me in the most painful situation in which any woman can be placed, that is, without the absolute certainty of a husband's death.'

"'Surely you cannot wish to have this certainty?' said I, 'if, as you say, you really like your husband?'

"'I would not wish him dead if he was with me, and contributing to *my* happiness,' replied my sister; 'but, if he really is alive, as I may never see him again, would it not be more satisfactory to me to hear of his death? for then I could marry openly at Buttermuth without the spiteful neighbours making a fuss about it, or

Doctor Snowgrass protesting against it. A lone woman's position is, to me, a most disagreeable one; some people may like it,' and she glanced somewhat maliciously at me; 'but then it must be those who have had the misfortune to be married to half-dead and alive men, that have been pinned down to their desks all day, and who come home in the evening, so tired, that they have not spirits to eat, drink and enjoy themselves.'

"Dinner being served, we sat down to table; and when the covers were removed, and the beef-steak and potatoes alone met the gaze of my sister, she gave a look of such utter disappointment, that I could scarcely refrain from smiling.

"'I hope there's another beef-steak on the gridiron?' said she.

"'There will be quite enough for us,' answered I; 'for I am a little eater.'

"'That may be; but I have a good appetite, I can tell you, and especially whenever I have fretted; and I've been so cut up to-day, that I'm as peckish as possible. Your servant doesn't know how to send up a beef-steak with fried onions, I can tell you. They should be served with plenty of butter, and all on the same dish,

instead of having the onions on a separate plate.'

"Observing that I did not help myself to any onions, she could not forbear expressing her wonder at my want of taste.

"'Ah! if you had been married to either of my husbands, you'd have liked onions as well as I do,' said she: 'a beef-steak is not worth a farthing without them; and I never can eat one without thinking of both of them, the onions reminds me of 'em so much. Do you know that this porter is but poor washy stuff? I'm sure your servant did not ask for the three X's. But surely you're not done eating already? for my part, I have not half dined. Poor John used to say—ay, and for the matter of that, so used my last husband too, that it was a pleasure to sit down to meals with me, for they never had to eat alone, as I kept them company with the knife and fork as long as they could eat. I hate a dinner without a man, for I'm sociable like. Have you got any pickled onions in the house?'

"When informed that I had not, she shook her head, and said, 'what! no pickles of any sort?'

"'No.'

" 'Well, that is extraordinary. I hope you have not forgot the Cheshire cheese?'

" 'Its lucky you are a little eater,' resumed she, as the last fragment of a very large beef-steak disappeared from the dish, 'for if you had a natural appetite, there would not have been half enough.'

" A pancake was now brought up, on seeing which, my sister, without any ceremony, ordered another to be prepared, and then asked for some brandy and sugar to make sauce for it.'

" 'What! no brandy in the house?' said she lifting up her hands and eyes. 'Well, I can't say you understand much about comfort. Send out the girl for some, and you may as well order a bottle, for I always take a glass or two of strong punch after dinner. No wonder you look so pale and keep so thin, when you drink nothing but water; you should follow my example, and you'd find yourself all the better for it, I can tell you, and much more sociable too.'

CHAPTER IX.

"NEVER did an evening pass off so heavily, as that which followed the dinner I have just described.

"'Have you no neighbours to drop in and play a game of cards?' asked my sister. On being told that I never played cards, she could not restrain her astonishment.

"'And how *do you* get through the evening?' demanded she.

"'I read, work, or write,' answered I.

"'Well, some people have such odd ways,' observed she. 'What a relief it must be to your husband to see a little life in foreign parts, and how dull it will be for him to come back here.'

"The tea-things had not been removed more than an hour, when, although she had eaten a plentiful supply of bread and butter

with her tea, she declared that she felt so hungry, that she must have a bit of something for supper.

" 'A rasher of bacon and a couple of eggs—a welch rabbit, or any other light matter,' she said would do. 'Whenever I make a poor dinner,' added she, 'I am obliged to have supper, or I can't close my eyes at night.'

" My servant wholly unaccustomed to such demands, and my larder ill provided to meet them, a compliance with those of my sister was productive of much embarrassment in my little household. It being dark, my young woman was afraid to venture out alone in search of the articles required to furnish a meal, and I really felt unwilling to send her out at so unseasonable an hour.

" 'O! for the matter of that, rather than go to bed with an empty stomach—(though how it could be empty after the quantity I had seen her devour, I could not imagine)—I will go out myself to buy what is wanted.'

" In spite of my representations of the impropriety of exposing herself to insult or annoyance in the streets, unprotected, at such an hour, she put on her cloak and bonnet, and sallied forth, leaving me alarmed and ashamed at her

inconsiderate proceedings. She had been absent nearly two hours, during which time, I really felt terrified lest some unpleasant adventure had occurred to her, in a neighbourhood so lonely as that in which my dwelling was placed, when I heard loud voices, among which hers could be distinguished, and sundry knocks at the gate of the little garden in front of my house. I trembled from head to foot, while my servant, not less alarmed than myself, unlocked the hall-door.

" 'Keep him prisoner, I charge you,' said my sister. 'At your peril I charge you not to let him go. A young villain to rob me of the provisions I had just bought.'

" The door being opened, I beheld two or three policemen, two of whom held a young lad by the arms, while he was crying bitterly, and entreating to be liberated.

" 'Keep him in custody; the young dog shall be punished if it costs me five pounds, that he shall,' said my sister.

" 'But we have found no stolen articles upon him,' observed one of the policemen.

" 'Because he threw them away, the young robber; but I'll make him repent it, that I will.'

" 'Let me go, for God sake let me go!'

exclaimed the weeping boy. 'I have not tasted food these two days, and have not a farthing in the world, nor a roof to shelter me.'

" 'Serve you right, you young thief! Mind, policeman, I'll have justice, cost what it may. A pretty pass, indeed, things are come to, if a respectable woman like me can't step out to buy a morsel of supper without being robbed.'

" 'I never meant to rob her, indeed I did not,' sobbed the boy. 'I only told her I was starving, and begged her to give me something in charity. She began to scold me; and I, grown desperate with hunger, made a snatch at the sausage in her hand, when she threw away the things she held, and caught fast hold of me, crying out until the police came up.'

" 'You see the young rogue confesses that he attempted to rob me, therefore you must keep him prisoner,' said my sister.

"I now advanced into the garden, and entreated her to let the unhappy youth be liberated, seeing that he was driven by starvation to make the attempt to seize the food.

" 'I'll do no such thing, the law shall take its course,' replied she: 'as sure as my name is Betsy Thomson I'll prosecute the thief.'

"'Oh! mother, mother,' exclaimed the boy, 'forgive me, forgive me!'

"'Bring him up to the lamp,' said my sister, 'that I may see his face.'

"'Ah! mother, I wish I had never left Buttermuth,' sobbed the poor boy, 'and I never would, only that stepfather was always a beating me.'

"''Tis he, sure enough,' said my sister, 'and a pretty business he has made of it; but he was always a good-for-nothing chap, and I was in hopes I was rid of him.'

"'Well, dang my buttons! if ever I seed such an hunnatural mother in all my born days,' said one of the policemen.

"'No, nor I neither,' said the other.

"'I entreat you to let this unfortunate boy go,' said I to the policeman, slipping at the same time a five-shilling piece into his hand, 'his mother can no longer wish you to detain him.'

"'But I will not take charge of him, that I won't,' said she. 'I'll never be hampered any more with children; and as for this scapegrace'——

"'Oh! mother have pity on me,' sobbed the boy.

"My heart was melted: I took the unfortu-

nate youth by the hand, led him into the house, the policeman making no objection, and even my servant was touched to tears, while the unnatural mother was wholly unmoved. He devoured some bread with a voraciousness that proved he had been famishing; and he was so thin, that he was almost reduced to a skeleton. I had a bed prepared for him, in spite of the fears openly expressed in his presence by his mother, that he would rob the house during the night; and my servant, previous to his taking possession of it, supplied him with soap and warm water in the scullery, to remove the dirt with which he was begrimed. I was obliged to ask my sister to cease uttering the bitter reproaches with which she overwhelmed him, and which drew tears from him.

"'I told you,' said she 'before you took him out of the hands of the police, that I would not take charge of him, so now you must be answerable for him, and a troublesome job you will have, I can tell you.'

"When I left my chamber the next morning, I discovered that my sister had taken her departure. She had written me a few lines, saying that the sight of her graceless son was so painful to her, that she could not remain under

the same roof with him; and that she might hear no more of him, she would not furnish me with her address. She hoped I would not have cause to repent my folly in taking him into the house; but, if I had, I must remember it was entirely contrary to her advice.

"'The poor boy is very ill, ma'am,' said my servant: his head wanders, and he talks such wild things.'

"I found him in a high state of delirium, imploring to be forgiven, and calling on his mother to have pity on him. I could not restrain my tears, as I listened to the incoherent ravings of the poor boy, and marked the care-worn face on which starvation had made such ravages. I sent for a physician, who after attentively examining the unfortunate youth, declared that he could hold out no hopes of his recovery. A violent fever had seized him, and his constitution was so undermined by being so long exposed to the hardships and privations of extreme poverty, that he soon sunk under it. His reason was restored a few hours before he breathed his last. He looked around in vain for his mother, and besought me to implore her forgiveness for him. All that kindness could effect to soothe his last hours was done for him,

and his expressions of gratitude and resignation, proved that he possessed a nature on which kind treatment would have produced the happiest result, had life been spared him. I saw him consigned to a humble grave, close to that which held my own lost child, and was thankful that his last hours were passed beneath a friendly roof, and his eyes closed by an aunt's hands.

"Slowly did the time pass, my dear Richard, and anxiously did I count it during the first year's absence of my husband. Every ship that left Barbadoes brought me letters from him, breathing affection and impatience to return to me; but fresh difficulties were presented every day to the final arrangement of the business that had taken him there, and I experienced all the sickness of heart produced by hope deferred, as the period of our re-union was from month to month protracted. I heard nothing of my sister, and my recollections of her were so fraught with pain, that I prayed I might see her no more, unless it pleased the Almighty to vouchsafe to change her heart.

"Henry had frequently mentioned in his letters, having formed a friendship with a Mr. Herbertson, a rich merchant at Barbadoes, who

pleased with his society, had shown him the utmost hospitality and kindness. This friend, an old bachelor, without any near relations, proposed to take Henry into partnership in his business, and even talked of making him his heir, if, after a longer intimacy, he continued to like him as well as he then did.

"'These offers, however tempting,' wrote Henry, 'I should not think myself justified in accepting, until I had perfectly wound up the complicated affair that has brought me here, and return to England to close all accounts with the firm in Mincing-lane, from whom I have experienced such good treatment. When this is accomplished, I will, if you my dear Lucy, have no objection, avail myself of Mr. Herbertson's kind intentions in my favour, and conduct you to the West Indies, where such an unexpected and brilliant prospect opens itself to us.'

"At length a letter arrived, stating that the affair on which he had been so long employed was finally terminated; and that my husband's passage was taken in the first homeward-bound ship. How great was my joy at this intelligence, and how was my impatience for our meeting increased by the knowledge that a few

months must now restore him so fondly loved to me. I became restless and nervous from the moment that I knew he had embarked. Every breeze, however gentle, alarmed—and every murky cloud terrified me. If the shutter of my chamber moved at night, I fancied there was a storm, and arose in an agitation that precluded sleep for many hours after.

"At length the joyful intelligence reached me, that the ship in which Henry had sailed was arrived in the Downs, and I instantly set off for Portsmouth to meet him. It was a fine day in spring, and every object in nature looked so bright, that I felt as if all around sympathized in the happiness with which my heart was overflowing at the prospect of soon being pressed in the arms of my dear husband. Every mile-stone passed was noted with pleasure, as bringing me nearer to him I so longed to meet, and anticipations of delight filled my whole soul. Arrived at Portsmouth, I hurried to the place indicated, and there learned that the passengers of the Orient had disembarked a few hours before, and were staying at the Crown-hotel. I flew rather than run to that inn, and, breathless with joyful agitation, inquired for Henry.

"'Mr. Chatterton did you say ma'am?' asked the pert-looking waiter.—'Mary Chambermaid, show this lady to No. 18, the sick gentleman's room.'

"'Sick, sick!' reiterated I, with an agony proportioned to the joy that only a moment before made my heart palpitate so quickly.

"'Yes, ma'am, the gentleman was brought here half an hour ago, very poorly.'

"I clung to the banister of the stairs for support, for I felt myself becoming so faint that I could hardly stand, yet I made a desperate effort to ascend, and at length reached the door of No. 18. I trembled so violently, that the chambermaid humanely lent me her arm, and uttered something about her hopes that the poor gentleman would soon get better.

"It now occurred to me, that if my husband was indeed so ill as he was represented to be, the sight of me, without due preparation, might prove dangerous to him; so I asked the chambermaid to enter the room and announce that I was arrived. I heard her do this; but I listened in vain for the tones of that dear and well-known voice, and, nearly excited to madness by the fears this silence awakened, I opened the door and tottered into the room. There

stretched on a bed, his face as pale as the pillow on which his head reposed, lay my poor Henry, seemingly unconscious of all that passed around him. I uttered no cry, though I felt ready to drop, but staggered towards the bed, trembling lest its occupant was indeed lifeless. I touched that emaciated hand, and he faintly opened his eyes, recognized me, and made an effort to rise and embrace me; and then, overpowered by the attempt, relapsed into insensibility. The medical man, who had been sent for previous to my arrival, now came, and the captain of the Orient soon followed. He was a kind-hearted man, who had taken a great interest in his unfortunate passenger, and who had done all that lay in his power for him. He told me, that the rupture of a blood-vessel in the chest, occasioned by violent sea-sickness, had reduced my husband to his present weak state; and he tried to encourage those hopes of his recovery, that it was but too evident to me that the doctor, who was present, did not authorize. Alas! a few hours justified my worst fears. Henry breathed his last before ten o'clock that night, without ever being able to utter a word, or even to show that he was conscious of my presence. How fearful was the transition, from

the joyful anticipations of the morning to the overwhelming grief of that night! Even now, though so many years have since passed, I cannot think of it without tears." And here poor Mrs. Chatterton wept bitterly.

"I spent the next day in a stupor of grief, that left me helpless and hopeless. Incapable of acting or reflecting, I was alive only to the consciousness of the overwhelming blow that had so unexpectedly crushed me, when I was indulging in blissful anticipations of the future. And there lay the object, on which every hope of happiness had rested, cold and motionless, insensible to the agony I was enduring; the pale and rigid face seemed to mock the anguish that filled my soul, and chilled my burning lips as I pressed them to that marble brow, over which my tears fell unheeded. And was it thus my Henry was restored to me, after nearly three long and weary years of absence, cheered only by the prospect of his return? I addressed him by the fondest epithets, as if he could hear the words of affection that were once so soothing to his ear, and I almost expected to see those pale and rigid lips move to answer my passionate ejaculations. That was a dreadful day! The bright sun came streaming into the windows,

and its beams fell on that still, cold brow, rendering it even more ghastly. I shut out the light, whose splendour formed such a contrast with the darkness that filled my soul, and I turned with loathing from the sounds of laughter, and the music of a hand-organ in the street, angered that sunshine or gaiety should exist, while he on whose life my every hope of happiness rested, was sleeping in death, and could never more enjoy either. Night brought better thoughts. In the silence and dim light of the chamber of death, I could pray for the resignation hitherto denied me; and as I knelt by the bed on which all that remained to me of him so fondly loved rested, I felt that in prayer must I henceforth alone seek for consolation, until summoned to join him, 'where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.'

"Never had I experienced the efficacy of prayer as on that night. Now that all hope of happiness here had forsaken me, I looked beyond the grave to find it by a reunion with my lost Henry and our child, and dwelt with satisfaction on the reflection of the brevity of life, and the frail tenure of that existence which now separated me from the loved and lost. I could not then think it possible that a long life

could be lent me when deprived of all that made it desirable, and dreamt not that I should live to be the old woman you now see, and who calmly relates the trials that then filled her heart with such intense grief.

" How strange and inscrutable is the human heart! mine, in its agony, shrunk at the idea of bearing the load of existence—become so oppressive by the loss of him I loved. Yet, now that age has deadened its feelings, and blunted its sensibility,—when I have outlived nearly all the friends of my youth and maturity, —I can look forward with satisfaction to a protracted span of life, though subjected to all the infirmities from which old age is never exempt.

" I experienced the utmost kindness from the hostess of the inn and her husband, and on the second day after the demise of my poor husband, I attended his remains to their last sad resting-place, and saw them placed by the side of our boy and my poor nephew. How solemn was the service read over him! Every word of it was impressed on my memory. Never can I forget the pang that shot through my heart as the first shovel-full of earth fell on his coffin. It seemed as if now indeed we were separated for ever, and a fresh sense of my bereavement

was experienced. As the earth closed over the coffin, until the last bit of it was hid from my aching sight, I bent forward loth to part from it; and then exhausted by my sorrow, I sank on a low tomb near his grave, unable to tear myself from the spot. How it jarred my nerves to overhear the common-place conversation of the men employed in completing the grave! I felt indignation mingle with my grief that they could thus talk and jest, while I was over-whelmed with sorrow; but when one of them broke into a popular song, I could support my vicinity to them no longer, and with trembling limbs and a breaking heart, I hurried to the coach that was waiting for me, casting many a glance behind at the mound of earth that covered the remains of him so dear to me.

"When I entered my home again,—that home so lately left with joyful anticipation of meeting with my poor Henry, and of returning to it with him,—how great was my anguish! Previously to leaving town, I had taken out his clothes, and had them carefully brushed. His linen was placed on clothes-horses, for the purpose of being aired. His hat and gloves were on the commode; and his writing apparatus all arranged by my own hands, to be ready for

his use when we arrived, met my sight; while *he*, for whom these fond preparations had been so lately made,—where was he? Those only who have been in a similar situation can imagine the vivid emotions caused by beholding the apparel, or objects used by the loved and lost. The shock occasioned by the death seems renewed, and yet there are moments, when looking at these well-known articles, that one doubts that he to whom they belonged is indeed gone for ever. How passionately did I press them to my lips, and bedew them with my fast falling tears! How vain and empty sounded the trite words of consolation uttered by my servant! I felt almost angry at her well-meaning but useless attempt to comfort me, and sought my bed that I might avoid her presence. And there were the two pillows arranged. Oh! you know not—you cannot know what I experienced on seeing them, and yet I would not have the one, formerly used by him, removed for all the world; and even still that pillow is always placed next to mine, and my head will rest on it in the grave.

"You are young, Mr. Richard, and as yet have had no troubles, so you cannot know the tenderness with which a bereaved heart clings

to aught that reminds one of happier days. I am rich in relics, sacred as having belonged to *him*; and though valueless to others, I would not part with them for treasures that might tempt many a stately dame.

CHAPTER X.

"THE firm behaved to me with the utmost kindness. They paid me a year's salary of my poor Henry, and the housekeeper who had presided for many years over this establishment, having soon after died, they offered me her vacant situation, which I have now filled forty-five years with satisfaction to my employers and to myself, and I trust also to those who board and lodge in this establishment, and to whose comfort I can conscientiously say I have done all in my power to administer. It seems but as yesterday that I came here bowed down with grief, yet thankful for having a home provided for me.

"Time is a wonderful consoler, Mr. Richard, and when joined to religion can effect miracles. At first, I would weep for hours in my cham-

ber, and felt a melancholy pleasure in the indulgence. Nay, for months after, if but for a moment I forgot my sorrow and gave way to a smile, I used to be seized with remorse, and bitterly reproach myself that I could thus forget my poor Henry. But this weak indulgence of grief proved its own remedy, for that which commenced in real sorrow, after a year or so, became a habit, and imagination was called in to the aid of memory to sustain the regret, I sinfully thought it my duty to keep up.

"Such is human nature, that we more frequently destroy grief than grief destroys us. We become, in the course of time, accustomed to the losses and privations which at first we deemed insupportable, and the sting is often removed from the heart, before the eye has ceased to weep.

"As years rolled on, I learned to take an interest in the humble duties I was called on to discharge. I could think of other and happier days, without the anguish experienced during my first years of widowhood, and having surrounded myself with the furniture and other objects that had belonged to my former abode, I could, when alone, summon up the memory

of the loved and lost, recalled by the sight of what had been so familiar to them. I have met with invariable kindness from the firm, and with a friendly attention from the elder clerks. Indeed, the younger ones have not been uncivil, except that sometimes I have thought—but it might only be fancy—that they did not show the interest that might have been expected, to the story to which you, my dear young friend, have listened with such patience and sympathy."

A few days after Mrs. Chatterton had narrated her simple history to me, my sister M garet arrived in town, and took up her abo with that kind and excellent woman, who received her with the greatest cordiality. I experienced the utmost pleasure in seeing my dear sister again, and felt highly gratified at finding the progress she had made in her education during my absence. Nor was I the only person to whom her presence afforded satisfaction, for Messrs. Murdoch and Burton showed an interest in this new addition to the dinner-table, very pleasing to me, while the junior clerks became more particular in their dress, and appeared less anxious to escape from the little circle assembled round the tea-table of

Mrs. Chatterton of an evening. I had no occasion to counsel Margaret with respect to the manner in which she ought to conduct herself towards the young men with whom she found herself associated. Nothing could be more prudent or correct than her behaviour towards them; while, to the elderly gentlemen, she evinced that attention so becoming from the young to the old,—an attention which seemed to be peculiarly gratifying to them.

About this time, my young friend Percy Mortimer arrived in London from Cambridge, and soon wrote to request me to call on him at a fashionable hotel in the west-end. I hurried off the next morning by seven o'clock, in order that I might be back in time for entering my office at the usual hour; and was not a little surprised at finding the porter of the hotel half asleep in his chair, and two or three yawning half-dressed waiters reclining on benches in the hall. When I asked to be shown to Mr. Percy Mortimer's room, they all rubbed their eyes as if to open them, and looked at me with perfect astonishment pictured in their faces.

"Mr. Percy Mortimer!" repeated one of them superciliously. "Why, he has not been

three hours in his bed, and I dare say, would little like to be awakened out of his first sleep at such an unseasonable hour as this."

"But I have come by his own request."

"Did he name this hour?"

"No, certainly he did not; he asked me to come to him as soon as possible, and I only got his note last night at eleven o'clock."

"Oh! then you are the person he expected last night?" said the waiter, staring impertinently at me. "Had you come to him then you would, in all probability, be now in your bed, as he is, for he did not let any of his guests go away until past four o'clock this morning."

"I must see him, however," said I, "so pray show me his room."

"If you *will* insist on disturbing him, mind that I warned you against it, and take the blame on yourself;" and so saying, the waiter conducted me to a chamber, the door of which he opened, and then retired. A loud snoring proclaimed that my friend was asleep, but I hesitated not to disturb his slumber, a task I found more difficulty in accomplishing than I had anticipated, for it was not until I had repeatedly, and somewhat roughly, too, shaken him

by the shoulder, that he awoke, and even then, he was some minutes before he became conscious of my presence.

"Let me sleep, and be —— to you!" murmured he, yawning and stretching himself. "What the devil do you want? Let me sleep, I tell you again, for I have a splitting headache."

When at length he opened his eyes, he exclaimed—"What, is it you, my dear Richard?" and he shook me heartily by the hand. His was in so high a state of fever, that I could readily credit his assertion of having, as he said, a splitting headache. "Now, that you have awoke me, ring the bell, and have the windows opened; and do, my dear fellow, order me some soda-water, with a little brandy in it, for that infernal champagne last night has made me as feverish and thirsty as the devil."

I cannot express the surprise I felt at hearing my friend interlard his discourse with phrases that, when we parted, he would have been as unwilling as myself to utter. The tacit admission, too, of the previous night's excess, shocked as much as it astonished me. But when daylight was admitted into his chamber, and its beams fell on his pale and haggard countenance,

I could hardly repress the exclamation of alarm that rose to my lips at his altered looks.

"Why, Dick, what an outlandish-looking animal you are!" said he. "Who the devil would suppose that you are a denizen of London? By Jove! you look ten times more countrified than our High-street shopmen at Oxford. Why the deuce do you not dress a little more like other people?"

This question rather annoyed me, I confess, for I had put on my best suit, and truth to say, thought myself a very presentable person. Something of what was passing in my mind must have been revealed by my face, for Percy Mortimer, with a kindness that reminded me of former times, said—

"Come, old fellow, never mind; you shall have a coat built by Berton, pantaloons made by Pike, a hat from Denizard, and boots from Gradelle. I'll teach you to tie a cravat *à-la-mode*—and if, when thus equipped, you will but learn to move a little more like other people, and look less sanctimonious, I will not be ashamed to introduce you among my set, who are, I assure you, the most fashionable at Christchurch. We kept it up very late last night; Elmsdale, the pleasantest fellow in the

world when he chooses, was in high force, and Asherwood quite himself. They'll astonish you, my boy, I can assure you; but when you get used to them, you'll like them amazingly."

"You forget that my time is so much occupied, that I have no leisure to enjoy even your society, my dear Percy," replied I. "I must be in the counting-house every morning by nine, and cannot leave it before five in the evening."

"But from five in the afternoon, the time at which we generally sally out for the first time in the day, until nine next morning, your time is surely your own?"

"I devote the evenings to reading aloud to my sister and Mrs. Chatterton, who is really a second mother to me."

"What, do you never go to the theatres, or seek the relaxation of a sly supper at a tavern, with some of your fellow-clerks?"

"Never."

"By Jove! I suspect you are turned methodist, Dick."

"*I* am unchanged, Percy; the alteration is in you."

Here the waiter announced the arrival of a fashionable tailor, hatter, and bootmaker, who were ordered to come up in succession; and

while he retired to execute Mortimer's instructions, the latter said—

"Now is your time, Dick; my tradespeople shall measure you for proper habiliments; for I swear, in your present dress you look like nothing but a methodist preacher."

"Excuse me, Percy, I cannot incur unnecessary expense."

"Why, what a stingy hound you are grown! I did not, however, mean that *you* should pay for the clothes! They can be put down in my bills, and the old governor will pay for them!"

"Pardon me, dear Percy, but I really cannot suffer this."

"Are you grown so proud, Richard, as to refuse a trifling present from me?"

"No, indeed, Percy; but the dress that suits your station would be so wholly unfit for mine, that my wearing it would expose me to the animadversions and ridicule of those with whom I live."

"Don't be obstinate Dick, there's a good fellow; let me order the things, and then you can appear with me in the set with whom I associate; whereas, in your present dress, it is impossible. You shall come and meet them here when I give them dinners, as I shall con-

tinually do; you shall go to the play with us, and after that to some of the *petit soupers*, when you shall see some of the prettiest and gayest women in London. Such creatures! by Jove, it will do you good to look at them!"

"Impossible, Percy: I must not be tempted to do that which my judgment disapproves."

Here the exclamation of ridicule, which I saw by the expression of Percy's face was ready to escape his lips, was interrupted by the entrance of a young man, who, though his dress bore evident symptoms of having been hastily put on, and was not such as he would have voluntarily presented himself in before strangers, yet he could not be mistaken for any thing but a person of birth and fashion. With him entered, unceremoniously, two men, whose ruffianly appearance offered a striking contrast to the elegance of his. Short, and thick set, with countenances in which a hardened expression of vulgarity and impudence shone pre-eminently, they had a peculiar insolence of manner that might have revealed their calling to any one less ignorant on such subjects than myself.

"How is this, my dear Elmsdale?" said Percy Mortimer, regarding with undisguised

astonishment the two intruders who stood close to his friend.

"The truth is, my dear fellow," replied Lord Elmsdale, "these two gentlemen (pointing with a sarcastic smile to the men) disturbed my slumbers at a most unconscionable hour this morning, and have taken such a fancy to my company, that I have not been able to induce them to relinquish it ever since; nay more, they seem determined to lodge me in apartments not quite so commodious as those I have hitherto been in the custom of inhabiting; but where they think they may always be sure of finding me."

"His lordship likes a joke," said one of the men, with a smile that revealed a set of teeth resembling in colour nothing so much as the keys of an old harpsichorde.

"Ay, ay—his lordship's a vag," observed the other.

"Vy, the upshot of this here matter is, sir," said the least ill-looking of the two men, "that my lord must go with us to a sponging-house, a thing his lordship by no manner of means likes, as why, bekase it is not the most hagreeablest place in the world for a gemman to find him-

self, unless he has a friend who will settle the business for him."

"Only fancy, Mortimer," said Lord Elmsdale, "that rascally scoundrel, Merrington the tailor, whom I have recommended to all my friends, has had the impudence and ingratitude to have me arrested for his d——d bill. Is it not too bad?"

"It is shameful," replied Percy Mortimer; but what is to be done?"

"That is precisely what I came to ask you, my dear fellow," said Lord Elmsdale.

"I am as poor as Job, and not half so patient," observed Percy Mortimer. "The governor has been abominably stingy of late, and has threatened to cut off the supplies until I retrench, a thing the most difficult in the world to accomplish, as no one ever knows when to commence? How much is the sum?"

"Not a great deal," answered Lord Elmsdale, "only three hundred; but my purse is so drained by buying Barrington's hunters, that I have not a guinea to spare."

"Sell the hunters," said Percy Mortimer; "I know Asherwood is dying to have them."

"What! part with my horses! No; hang

me, if I do! and above all to such a screw as Asherwood. Why, would you believe it, the fellow had the cool impertinence to write me a note an hour ago, in answer to my request to come and assist me, that he could not bear to see a friend in distress, and therefore must decline."

"You have not yet told me the amount of the sum for which you are in 'durance vile,'" said Percy Mortimer.

"Only three hundred," replied Lord Elmsdale.

"You forget the costs, my lord," interrupted one of the bailiffs; "they come up to forty-eight—seventeen and eleven-pence."

"Three hundred and fifty will cover the whole," resumed Lord Elmsdale; "and if you can lend me that sum, my dear Mortimer, you will really oblige me."

"'Pon my soul! I have not so much at my banker's at this moment, and my allowance will not become due for two months," assured Percy.

"Well, if you will accept a bill at two months for me, it will do quite as well," said Lord Elmsdale, with the utmost coolness; "and

I dare say this gentleman," turning to one of the sheriff's officers, "will be able to get it discounted for me.'

"Vy, you see, my lord," answered the bailiff, "money never was so scarce as at present, so I don't know whether I could get it done or not. There's the Marquess of Willerton, who is willing to pay sixty per cent. for as much money as he can get, and will take any quantity of champagne and claret at the lender's own prices; and the Earl of Hardingbrook, who does not object to pay sixty-five per cent., and is as generous as a prince into the bargain. When noblemen behave as sich, and hact in this princely manner, why money becomes scarcer and scarcer; so I don't think I could get a bill cashed for you for less than the noblemen I have mentioned pay."

"No, hang it! that is too much, and I really cannot consent to such usurious interest," said Lord Elmsdale.

"Then you had better make up your mind at vonst to come with us," answered the sheriff's officer gruffly; "for we have already lost all the morning waiting on you; and as for usurious interest, I don't know what you mean, when the law has now passed to purtect honest men

by enabling 'em to get as high an hinterest as they can for their money. And a good job too, for it was a shame to see how when a man was so hobliging as to lend money to keep a gemman out of prison, that same gemman or his friends would take advantage of the law against usury, and cheat him. But matters are now changed, and fathers and guardians are fit to go mad because they can't hindict men for usury; and those as has money to lend, drink a bumper every day to the health of the kind and sensible gemmen as had the new law passed."

"Will you give me your acceptance, my dear Mortimer?" asked Lord Elmsdale; "for I see there is nothing left but to comply with the terms of these harpies."

"If you will pledge me your honour it shall be paid, I will accept it," answered Percy Mortimer.

"I give you my honour," replied Lord Elmsdale.

"His lordship has given that to so many," whispered one of the men, "that he can't have much of it left."

"Ring the bell, and send for a stamp," said Percy Mortimer.

"There's no hoccasion," observed Mr. Ben Eliason, the sheriff's officer, drawing out a large pocket-book, "I always keeps a few ready in this here book in case of haccidents."

"Draw the bill at three months date, for four hundred pounds," said Percy Mortimer.

"That won't do, sir, no vays at all, bekase there will be sixty pounds for the premium, and ten pounds for the interest of the sixty, so that the bill must be made out for four hundred and seventy pounds."

"What! is it possible that you have the conscience to charge interest on so large a premium?" exclaimed Lord Elmsdale.

"Vy, my lord, I have a large family, and brings 'em up respectably, and that's hacting haccording to my principle. I also expects as how your lordship will take six dozen of my best champagne, at seven pound a dozen. There aint better to be had in all Lunnon, and it's as cheap as dirt."

"What the devil am I to do with your bad wine?" demanded Lord Elmsdale.

"Vy, as other folks do, my lord—drink it."

"Heaven defend me from inflicting such a trial on my constitution! Why, I was half

poisoned the other day when dining with Lord Hardingbrooke; and your confession of having made him take your champagne, explains the cause," observed Lord Elmsdale.

"Vy, then my lord, you'll add another two per cent. to the bill, or I will not discount it, that's all; so do as you please."

"I have no house to receive it," muttered Lord Elmsdale.

"Vy, can't you send it to some of them there young ladies, as you are friends with at the hopera? I'll be bound not one of 'em will refuse it, and 'twill do 'em a deal of good, poor young creaturs! into the bargain."

Both Lord Elmsdale and Percy Mortimer laughed at this suggestion of Mr. Ben Eliason, who resumed, "It's quite true, my lord, the young creaturs takes to it like mother's milk; and if there is no lady to whom you could send the vine, vy p'raps this here gemman vould'nt hobject to take it, for he seems a wery hobliging gemman; and, moreover, as he has haccepted the bill, it would be a genteel compliment."

"No, no!" said Percy Mortimer, "I will have nothing to say to it."

"Vell, my lord, I must say as how your

lordship is very hard on me, and that too after I behaved so purlitely to you. Vy, you know yourself I might have harrested you yesterday in the park, when you was a hescorting that there beautiful countess as lives in Grosvenor-square, or have nabbed you in St. James's afore all them there chaps in the club vindows, vich would have set 'em a chattering for a veek, for they are mighty glad whenever a friend falls into a trouble, though they pretend to be so wery sorry, and talk and talk until they have told it to every one they meet, always making the matter a little worse than it really is."

"Well, then, if it must be so, add the two per cent. to the bill," said Lord Elmsdale; "better do that than poison some unfortunate person with your wine."

The two per cent. was added, the bill accepted, and given into the hands of Mr. Ben-Eliason; and Lord Elmsdale said to that personage, "I conclude, sir, that I am now released from the pleasure of your society?"

"Not yet, my lord; I cannot let you go free huntil I have searched the sheriff's-court, to see if there are any other writs against you. I'll send off my man to examine in a jiffey. Has

your lordship got a sovereign in your pocket to give him to pay the expense?"

"What! *more* to pay?" exclaimed Lord Elmsdale, putting his hand into his waistcoat pockets, one after the other; and then drawing it out, he said "he had forgotten his purse, and asked Percy Mortimer to lend him a sovereign?" with which request the latter having complied, the gold coin was transferred into the hand of Mr. Ben Eliason; and I, finding that it only wanted a quarter to nine, took a hasty leave of my friend, and hurried off to my office, which I entered breakfastless, and pitying him for the difficulties which I plainly saw must soon environ him, from the extravagant and reckless associates with which he seemed to be surrounded, and the imprudent facility with which he met their demands on him.

The next day Percy Mortimer came to me at five in the afternoon, the hour he knew I should be released from my office. Dressed in a style of fashion peculiar to what are called dandies, I could scarcely have recognized my friend, so wholly altered was his appearance. Pale and haggard, his looks but too well denoted that the previous night had been passed in one

of those orgies alike destructive to health and morals. After the first salutation was over,—

"I want you, my dear Richard," said he, "to render me a service. The governor, as I told you yesterday, has grown stingy, and will not stand my demands for money."

Seeing the surprise expressed in my countenance, he added, "you look incredulous, but by Jove! I have stated the fact."

"What! your father?—the most generous of men, and the most indulgent of parents! You must indeed have far exceeded all the bounds of moderation, if you have exhausted *his* patience, my dear Percy."

"I must confess, Richard, that *I have* been a little imprudent; but young men will be young men, and the governor has pulled me up somewhat sharply: but to the point—I want money, and have come to you to know if you can procure me a loan?"

"The firm will surely advance you a loan sooner than to me,—indeed I dare not propose such a measure to them," replied I.

"Why who the devil ever dream't of asking you to do such a thing? and as for *my* asking them, I would just as soon—ay, and sooner too—apply to the old governor himself. No, what I

want is, for you to try if, among any of your friends, jews or gentiles, you could obtain me five hundred pounds?"

"I have few acquaintances in London, my dear Percy, and still fewer friends. I know not a single money-lender in London, and consequently cannot render you the service you require; and even if I could, the specimen of extortion, so ruinous in its consequences, which I witnessed yesterday in your room, would preclude me from adopting any step to facilitate such loans. I have two years and a half salary, nearly untouched, and it is entirely at your service. Do not be offended at my proposing so slight an obligation to one to whom I owe so many and weighty ones; and, trifling as the sum is to you, who are accustomed to a large expenditure, it may prevent your having recourse to money-lenders."

"Heaven help your innocence! my poor Richard," Percy replied, "the sum you have so wisely saved, and so generously offered to lend me, would be but as a drop of water in the ocean, to relieve my wants. I have lent all my ready money, to my college friends, and have, besides, accepted their bills to a very serious amount, so that I now find myself positively

without funds to meet the exigencies of the moment, or to pay my own tradespeople, who are becoming clamorous and importunate."

"But can, or will none of your college friends repay any of the sums they owe you?"

"Yes, when their governors die, but not before. Why, bless you! they are all even worse off in their pecuniary affairs than I am, for their credit is less good, it being well known to the money-lenders that they have raised the wind, by post-obits payable on the death of their governors, to nearly the full value of their rent-rolls, whereas I have not yet had recourse to this measure, and the rogues know my governor is rich. The fact is, I like my father too well to calculate on his death, although he *is* grown somewhat stingy of late; but I suppose the insufficiency of his allowance proceeds from his ignorance of the expensive habits in which gentlemen commoners indulge in Christchurch. You cannot imagine the demand for money there. Why, the price of three hunters will swallow up nearly a year's allowance. A first-rate horse cannot be had for much less than four or five hundred; and two or three hacks cost from eighty to one hundred each. Then a stud-groom, with his long bills and helpers

innumerable, come to a heavy sum, without counting liveries for the said groom and helpers. You know not, my dear Richard, what it is to have a rascally valet, with a weekly book in which shoe-strings, and tooth-picks, blacking, and brushes, form the prominent items of an illegible, ill-spelt, and half-blotted account, always amounting to a sum that might stock the shop of a dealer in these articles. Hang me! if I ever can guess where my fellow gets the money he swears he pays for me! Add to these, bills for soda-water, of which beverage an inordinate quantity is consumed in the mornings at my chambers, probably because an equally inordinate quantity of wine has been consumed there the previous night. But there would be no end to the causes I could assign for my want of cash, were I to recapitulate even half the drains on my purse: suffice it to say, that never was proverb more true than that which says, 'that gold makes itself wings to fly away.'"

"I have bethought me of a plan," said I, "that may lead to some good. Allow me to consult my excellent and kind friend, Mrs. Chatterton. She has many friends among monied people, and could perhaps suggest some means of procuring what you require."

"Surely you do not refer to that prosy old woman who used, and I dare say still continues to set every one around her asleep by her long stories?"

"Yes, Mrs. Chatterton is, I believe, somewhat addicted to long stories, but is nevertheless one of the most worthy women in the world, and will, I know, be glad to render you any service in her power."

"Very well, name my difficulties to her, and I will call here about nine o'clock this evening to learn the result. What a bore it is that you should live so far off from the haunts of civilization; but you can't help it, Richard, so it's no use talking about it. Let me see my old acquaintance, your sister Margaret; for I remember our childish days perfectly, when I used to bestow on her pictures, books, and playthings, and she used to clap her hands with joy on seeing me approach. Those were pleasant times, Richard,—ay, pleasanter perhaps than the present, the amusement and friends of which are so expensive. Good-bye until nine o'clock,—good-bye."

Mrs. Chatterton had waited dinner nearly an hour for me, an attention I could have well dispensed with, when I saw how ill-humoured it

rendered the clerks, senior as well as junior. When the meal was over, Messrs. Murdoch and Burton settled at their chess-board, and Messrs. Bingly, Thomas, and Wilson departed for the theatre, for half-price enjoyment, of which they still retained their preference. I mentioned to Mrs. Chatterton, in the presence of Margaret, the difficulties of my friend Percy Mortimer.

"O! brother," exclaimed my sister, "I have five pounds; take them and give them to poor Mr. Percy Mortimer, who was always so kind to me."

"What does Margaret say?" asked Mrs. Chatterton.

I could hardly repress a smile, when I repeated to her the innocent girl's offer.

"Bless you, my dear child!" said she, "five pounds indeed! why, I dare be sworn, one hundred would not be sufficient to meet his wants. Oh! those young men—those young men—what terrible spendthrifts they are! And with such a generous father too, one who refused him nothing. 'Twill be a heavy blow on Mr. Mortimer, that it will, when he finds out his son's extravagance."

"It will be a still heavier one," said I, "if he finds that his son has been raising money at

ruinous interest from usurious money-lenders—harpies who fatten on the substance of the unwary."

"Surely Mr. Percy will not have recourse to such a measure, Richard?"

"He has no other resource, my dear Mrs. Chatterton. He requires five hundred pounds to extricate him from present embarrassments, fears to provoke his father's anger by applying to him, and unless some friend can assist in finding a loan for him on equitable terms, he will fall into the hands of the jews."

"This must not be—this must not be," said Mrs. Chatterton. "I, yes I, who owe all I possess to the firm of which his good father is at the head, will not suffer it. I have vested all my savings in the funds, and they amount to no inconsiderable sum. I will sell out a portion, and save this heedless young man from ruin, and his father from chagrin. But a thought strikes me. What if Mr. Mortimer should discover that I have supplied his son with money, and imagine that in so doing I have encouraged his extravagance? And, above all, should the assistance I mean to offer be the means of shielding Mr. Percy from the disagreeable but salutary effects of his imprudence, and so check

the reflections likely to be awakened by annoyance, I should never forgive myself. I will see the young gentleman, and speak to him, and endeavour to make him sensible of the folly of his ways. If I perceive that he is resolved to be wise in future, I will advance even all my little fortune; and perhaps this act of confidence and good-nature, by which I expose my declining days to the chance of poverty, may, if he has a good heart, assist in working his reformation."

While we were yet conversing on this subject, Percy Mortimer entered the room. He appeared to be much struck with the alteration and improvement in my sister Margaret, who, from the pretty child he had left, had grown into a blooming and beautiful girl, who received his friendly greetings with a modesty and grace that increased his apparent admiration. There was a gravity mingled with the kindness of Mrs. Chatterton's reception that seemed to make an impression on him; and when, after having made a signal to Margaret to retire to her own chamber, the good old lady, with great good sense and feeling, pointed out to Percy Mortimer the inevitable ruin he would draw on himself, and the sorrow he would entail on

his excellent father, it was evident that she had not spoken in vain. She then offered him the loan of five hundred pounds, and the delicacy with which she did so, made a still more forcible impression on Percy, whose goodness of heart enabled him to duly appreciate her kindness.

It was not without considerable reluctance that he consented to accept her offer, for his delicacy shrunk from availing himself of it. At length, his scruples being vanquished, it was arranged that the five hundred pounds was to be withdrawn from the funds, and appropriated to his use as speedily as possible.

Percy proposed to spend the remainder of the evening with us; and the senior clerks, being too much engaged with their chess-board to interrupt or heed our conversation, and the junior ones being at one of the theatres, we were enabled to chat with perfect freedom. Margaret, who had been summoned to make tea, took a part in the discourse, and surprised, as well as delighted Percy by the cheerfulness, good sense, and *naïveté* of her remarks. He seldom took his eyes off her face, and listened with untiring interest to her observations. At half-past eleven o'clock, a late hour for Mrs. Chatterton and Margaret, though an unusually

early one for Percy Mortimer, he took his leave, declaring that he had not passed so rational or so agreeable an evening for a long while, and expressing his hope that he might be often permitted to repeat the pleasure.

"He is a fine, and I am quite sure, a good young man," said Mrs. Chatterton, the moment he had departed.

"And so handsome," added Margaret, half unconsciously, her cheek becoming suffused with blushes, as the glance of Mrs. Chatterton's somewhat grave expression of surprise met her eye.

"Yes, Margaret, he is, as you say, handsome," observed that worthy woman, looking gravely at the blushing face of my sister; "but as the old phrase has it, 'handsome is that handsome does;' and the doings of Mr. Percy Mortimer, I regret to say, as far at least as prudence goes, have not been very recommendable."

Margaret blushed still more deeply, and seemed occupied in intently counting the faded squares and flowers in the nearly worn-out carpet of the room.

The next day, as had been agreed on, Mrs. Chatterton left the house after breakfast, in order to instruct her broker to sell out of the

funds, and returned before mid-day, bringing with her five hundred pounds, which were to be transferred to Percy Mortimer at two o'clock. Punctual as a lover he arrived precisely at that hour, and having received the money, and given his promissory note for the amount, he still lingered in the apartment, frequently, as Mrs. Chatterton subsequently told me, looking anxiously towards the door. At length he inquired, but not without evident symptoms of embarrassment, "where Margaret was?"

"She is occupied, sir," answered Mrs. Chatterton, somewhat coldly, and he soon after took his leave.

While we sat chatting in the evening, to our great surprise Percy Mortimer entered.

"I am come to ask for a cup of tea," said he; and then observing the grave aspect of Mrs. Chatterton, he added, "I found last evening pass so pleasantly, that I have ventured to intrude again."

Margaret coloured to her very temples; and the quickened movement of her heart, visible by the agitation of the snowy kerchief that shaded her bust, betrayed the excitement that the visit occasioned her. I perceived at a glance that Percy Mortimer was not a welcome guest

to Mrs. Chatterton; and from the frequent looks she bent on Margaret, I discovered that she suspected that my sister was the object that attracted Percy to pay this unexpected, and to her, unwished for visit. For myself, I felt so sincerely attached to this friend of my boyhood, that his presence afforded me pleasure, and I almost blamed my good old Mrs. Chatterton for the reserve and coldness of her manner towards him. Margaret blushed and stammered every time Percy addressed her; and though she seldom raised her eyes from the work which occupied her delicate fingers, it was plain that she was perfectly conscious that his were rarely withdrawn from her face.

The junior clerks,—who, contrary to their usual custom of visiting some one of the theatres, had remained at home during the whole evening,—intently eyed Percy Mortimer, whose dress appeared to excite no less surprise than admiration in their eyes. He was, or seemed to be, hardly aware of their presence; though he acknowledged with politeness that of the senior clerks, with whom he had, in his boyhood, formed a slight acquaintance. When he had withdrawn, and that Margaret had retired to her chamber, Mrs. Chatterton told me it

was her desire that the visits of Mr. Percy Mortimer should not be encouraged.

"I perceive," continued that worthy woman, "that he is already smitten, as it is called, by your sister; and more still, that she is but too well disposed to return his attachment. They must be kept asunder, my dear Richard; for it would be but a bad return for the continued kindness that I have, during so many years experienced from the firm of Mortimer and Co and the protection afforded to you by Mr. Percy's father, were we to give that young gentleman opportunities for cultivating an attachment to Margaret, which never could be sanctioned by him. We must also consider what is due to your sister, whose peace of mind might be seriously injured, were she much longer permitted to enjoy the society of one, who, whatever may be his imprudence, possesses such agreeable manners and good looks, that few young women could remain insensible to his attentions. I know it is hard for you to repel the approaches of the friend of your childhood; but remember, it is necessary for his welfare, as well as for that of your sister, and that the task will become a more difficult one, the longer it is deferred."

It was impossible to dissent from Mrs. Chatterton's opinion; yet the thought of appearing cold or ungrateful to Percy was most painful to me, which she perceiving by my countenance, kindly undertook to explain our feelings to Percy Mortimer on his next visit.

The following day, Mrs. Chatterton was surprised by the arrival of a middle-aged man of gentlemanly manners and appearance, who having announced himself as her nephew, inquired anxiously for tidings of his mother and brother, with whom he expressed his ardent desire to share the fortune with which Providence had been pleased to bless him. He was deeply affected, when informed that his aunt could give him no intelligence of his mother, and that his brother was no more, and evinced an affection towards her whom he now considered almost as a parent, that excited a lively feeling in the breast of that excellent woman. He revealed to her, that having entered as cabin-boy on board an Indiaman, he had been so fortunate as to conciliate the good opinion of an old gentleman of great wealth returning to India, after a fruitless search for his relations, among whom he wished to spend the remaining years of his life, and to bequeath the fortune

acquired by business during a forty years' residence in the burning climes of the east.

Finding neither relative nor friend in England, all those whom he had formerly known having died during his long absence, he determined to return to Bombay, and spend his declining days among those acquaintances with whom he had lived during the last years; and was on his voyage back, broken in health and spirits from the disappointment he had encountered in England, when the attentions he had experienced from the active and kind-hearted little cabin-boy, won his goodwill. On arriving at Bombay, he declared his intention of providing for the lad, took him to his house, procured for him good masters; and having had reason to be satisfied with his progress in his studies, and above all with the affectionate devotion with which his protégé repaid his kindness, he adopted him as his heir, and twenty years afterwards died, bequeathing to him his large fortune.

Mrs. Chatterton carefully concealed from her nephew the folly and culpability of his mother; and he, forgetful of the unkindness and selfishness which marked her conduct in his childhood, took every step to discover whether she

was still living, that he might provide for her. The advertisements he caused to be inserted in the newspapers, at length elicited intelligence of her; for a person, beneath whose roof she had expired in a state of distress, answered the enquiries, by which her son ascertained that she had contracted another marriage with a quack doctor, who having plundered her of nearly all she possessed, deserted her, soon after which an indigestion, produced by a surfeit of her favourite dish, roast goose, purchased with seven shillings of her last sovereign, put a period to her existence.

The aunt and nephew being all that now remained of the family, Mr. Jervis earnestly pressed his aunt to go and reside with him, which she having declined, he purchased a most commodious house for her, which he caused to be handsomely furnished, and insisted on her taking possession of it; settling on her an ample income, for supplying not only the comforts, but the elegancies of life.

While Fortune's ever moving wheel was scattering favours on Mrs. Chatterton, the firm of Mortimer, Allison, Finsbury and Co., to which she was so sincerely attached, encountered a severe reverse from the fickle goddess. The

failure of a great banking-house in India, in which they were partners, and the pressure of bankruptcies in America and at home, occurring at the same time, plunged them into such difficulties, that they were compelled to call a meeting of their creditors; and the large fortune of Mr. Mortimer, who unfortunately for himself had permitted his name to remain as a sleeping partner in the firm, becoming liable for the debts, was engulphed in the general ruin. The shock was too much for him, whose constitution had been weakened by long and recent illness. He soon sunk under the blow, leaving his son Percy nearly penniless, and without a profession. Then it was that Mrs. Chatterton proved the gratitude for her late friend, which she had so often expressed; for she entreated her nephew to come forward to his assistance, and that worthy man readily answered to her call.

While they were consulting on the most efficient means of providing for Percy, he, poor fellow! awakened from the follies in which he had lately been plunged, bitterly deplored his errors, and upbraided himself with a deep remorse, for the anxiety and chagrin his reckless extravagance must have caused his father.

Salutary, though painful, were the reflections in which he now indulged; and Mrs. Chatterton, who witnessed his regrets for the past, and heard his prudent resolves for the future, no longer excluded him from her house, where, from every member of the domestic circle assembled around her, he experienced the most cordial sympathy and affection.

Percy Mortimer, bowed down by sorrow, was a much more interesting, and consequently, a more dangerous person in the eyes of a girl like Margaret, than when, enacting the *rôle* of a dissipated man of fashion, he seemed conscious of his own attractions, and doubted not their effect on others. The love that maidenly modesty might, and would have concealed from its object, had his prosperity still placed so great a disparity between them, now shone forth in every glance, and modulated every tone of the low and sweet voice of Margaret, when addressing him.

While affairs were in this state, Mrs. Chatterton was waited on one day by Mr. Bristow, one of the partners of an eminent solicitors' house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, who to her great surprise and joy, acquainted her, that a large fortune bequeathed to her late husband, with

reversion to her, now awaited her acceptance. This unexpected bequest came from Mr. Herbertson, who had been several years dead, but whose will, having been mislaid, was only discovered a short time before, in a box that had been overlooked in the search made for it by the executors of the deceased lawyer, in whose hands it had been placed.

"You are now, madam," said Mr. Bristow, "in the possession of no less a sum than eighty-five thousand pounds,—a noble fortune, which I heartily wish you health to enjoy."

When the first emotions of surprise and joy had subsided in the heart of Mrs. Chatterton, she sighed deeply, and tears filled her eyes. "Ah!" said she, "had my poor Henry, and our blessed boy, lived to see this day, how happy would this unexpected acquisition of fortune have rendered me! To have seen *them* raised to affluence, would indeed have been a source of joy and thanksgiving to me; but now, an old and childless widow, fast approaching the tomb where those blessed objects repose, of what avail is this vast wealth? My nephew, now my only remaining relative, is already in possession of a large fortune, so needs not any portion of mine. Ah! had my husband and child lived—

but let me not be ungrateful, or murmur at the decrees of an all-wise Providence. Have I not"—and she looked around the tea-table where we were seated, and smiling through her tears, continued—"have I not children left? Yes, Richard and Margaret—ay, and Percy Mortimer too; ye shall be my children, and from this hour I adopt you as such. No thanks, no tears. You, Richard and Margaret, have behaved towards me with all the affection and duty that children could show a parent, and have soothed my declining days. Your father, Percy, was a father and a friend to me when I was left alone in the world, and I only discharge a debt of gratitude, in adopting his son. Messrs. Allison and Finsbury, too, shall be assisted, for they are childless, and a few thousands may be of use. Come and embrace me, my children, and promise that you will never forsake your old adopted mother, until you have laid her in the grave, by the side of those dear ones whom she has so fondly remembered. You, my children, Richard and Margaret, listened to the simple story of the prosy old woman, without feeling, or at least, without exhibiting any symptoms of the impatience and disgust so generally experienced by the young and gay.

You shared my tears, when I wept in recounting the heavy trials I had undergone in losing my poor Henry and our boy, and I loved you for this sympathy, so precious to a heart that had been so long deprived of it. You believed me, when I told you of my husband's goodness—a goodness, that while he lived, was the blessing of my life, and which even now has brought affluence, that enables me to provide so amply for those dear to me. Yes, my children, it was that goodness which no one could live near him without being sensible of, which won the esteem of Mr. Herbertson, and induced him to make the bequest he has done; for what could he know of me, except that he judged that so excellent a man as Henry was, could not have been so fondly attached to an unworthy woman? This great fortune then, I look on as coming to me from my dear husband, for it was acquired solely by his merit and goodness."

The nephew of Mrs. Chatterton, who emulated her in generosity and kindness of heart, highly approved of her intentions in our favour, and lent her his assistance in carrying them into effect. But it was not alone to us that this excellent woman extended her benefactions. She liberally assisted the junior clerks of the

firm, who had been domiciled with her in the establishment in which I had the good fortune to find her; secured a competency to John Stebbings the old porter, and two servants who had so long waited on her; and made handsome presents to the senior clerks, who had, fortunately, by their prudence, secured for themselves a maintenance. In short, all who had formed a part of the domestic circle in Mincing-lane, had reason to bless her. By her generosity I was enabled to provide for my father and brothers, by placing them in a large farm amply stocked, where they enjoy all the comforts of life, and where they have accumulated a considerable fortune. The debts of Percy Mortimer were discharged by Mrs. Chatterton, by whose counsel he determined henceforth to be guided. He returned no more to college, and his noble friends at Christchurch, having heard of the failure of the house to which his father had belonged, took no trouble to renew their acquaintance with him.

"It is strange," said Percy to me one day, "that neither Lords Elmsdale nor Asherton have ever replied to the letters I wrote them! Both are deeply in my debt, for I repeatedly lent them money; and, as you are aware, I

accepted a bill for four hundred and seventy pounds for Elmsdale the day he was arrested by his tailor."

"Both these lords," replied I, "know the misfortune that has occurred to the firm of which your lamented father was the head; and consequently, imagine that you can no longer render them the same services that proved so opportune on former occasions. They therefore are disposed, as their silence proves, to forget an acquaintance from whom they can no more derive any advantage."

"But surely Elmsdale will pay the bill I accepted for him?"

"I am much inclined to doubt it: he has just got into parliament, which will protect his person from arrest; and be assured he will leave you to pay this bill, which, if I mistake not, will become due in a few days."

"I cannot think quite so ill of him," said Percy Mortimer; "although I admit that his unfeeling and ungrateful conduct, in not replying to my letters, justifies your suspicions."

In a few days after this conversation I accompanied my sister Margaret and Percy Mortimer to the Exhibition, and while the latter stopped to speak to a neighbour of his late father's,

Margaret and I paused before a picture from the admirable pencil of Edwin Landseer, around which several persons were assembled. Two young men of the group turned from the picture, and staring rudely at my sister, embarrassed her so much that she asked me to move on. I had been so intently admiring the *chef-d'œuvre* of art before me, that I had not observed the impertinence of these young men, until the proposal of my sister to change our position, drew my attention to them; and no sooner did I look, than I recognised in one of them, Lord Elmsdale. Unabashed by the sternness with which I regarded him, he still continued to gaze at Margaret, whose blushing cheeks betrayed the annoyance his rudeness occasioned her.

At this moment Percy Mortimer joined us, and placing himself by the side of my sister, began to express his admiration of the picture that had attracted us. Lord Elmsdale turned his head aside, and whispering his companion, they both moved off without betraying any symptom of recognition of Percy Mortimer, whose face crimsoned at this open avoidance of him by his old friends. I felt inclined to resent the impertinence of Lord Elmsdale's manner of staring at

Margaret; but, unwilling to excite observation in such a crowd, I only showed my sense of his rudeness by glancing sternly at him whenever I saw his eyes turned towards her. As we were leaving the room, our exit was impeded near the doorway by the pressure of the crowd, and we again found ourselves in contact with Lord Elmsdale and his companion. The former, taking advantage of our proximity, pressed so closely behind Margaret, that I felt her shrink; and, turning to observe the cause, I saw him withdraw his hand, which it now became evident he had presumed to touch her with. I pushed him from her with a violence that left no doubt of my intention to insult him, and he, becoming red in the face with anger, demanded "why I did so?"

Percy Mortimer instantly said, "Lord Elmsdale, your insolence to me in not acknowledging my acquaintance I intended to demand satisfaction for in another place; but your ungentlemanly and unmanly conduct in pressing against this lady, requires immediate notice. Let me have your address, and yours also, Lord Asherwood?"

"I am not aware that I have any account to render you, sir," replied Lord Asherwood, "and

consequently see no necessity to comply with your request."

"Here is mine," said Lord Elmsdale, handing a card to Percy Mortimer; and, with an air of the utmost *hauteur*, he and his friend turned on their heels, and left the room.

Margaret, trembling with emotion, entreated Percy to be calm, while her countenance bore evidence of the terror in which this disagreeable fraças had plunged her. The persons around us, who had heard the conversation, and witnessed the giving of the card, stared so much at us, that in pity to the feelings of my sister, we hurried from the place, and having left her in safety at the residence of Mrs. Chatterton,—reiterating her entreaties to us, "to take no further notice of the rudeness of that odious lord," as she called him,—we retraced our steps, and entered a coffee-house, to consult on what had best be done.

Percy there wrote a letter to Lord Elmsdale, demanding a hostile meeting, the time and place to be immediately named by any friend his lordship would appoint to act for him on the occasion. I was to take this letter, and act as second to Percy—a position for which my inexperience of such affairs nearly incapacitated me. My

own anger had been so much excited towards Lord Elmsdale, that I heartily wished to punish him for his impudent behaviour to my sister, and determined on doing so as soon as Percy's quarrel with him was arranged. And yet, even while under the influence of passion, the religious sentiments so carefully instilled in my youth operated on my mind, and whispered in the still, small voice of conscience, that to seek the life of another, or to expose that of my friend, was acting contrary to the precepts I had received. Yet would the libertine glance of Elmsdale fixed on my pure and innocent sister even while leaning on a brother's arm, recur to my memory, and kindle afresh the wrath that reason and religion had tried to vanquish; and the insolent superciliousness of both these lordlings would again seem present, and add fuel to the flame of my anger. I found Lord Elmsdale had not yet returned to the hotel where he resided, so having left a card with my address, I returned to the coffee-house, where Percy Mortimer had agreed to wait for me. He, however, was not there; and, on my questioning the waiter whether no message had been left for me by my friend, he informed me, that shortly after my departure, two men having entered the

coffee-room in which the young gentleman was reading a newspaper, they had gone up and spoken to him, and he having entered a coach with them, had driven off, leaving no message whatever.

"The truth is, sir," said the waiter, "I am of opinion that the young gentleman was harrested, and is gone with the sheriff's officers, for such I'm sure they were, to a sponging-house."

I gave instructions to the waiter, that in case any letter should arrive for me, it was to be forwarded immediately to Mrs. Chatterton's; and then, much depressed in spirits, I returned to her abode. Margaret, on seeing me enter alone, instantly concluded that something fatal had occurred to Percy Mortimer; and, in the terror and agitation occasioned by this supposition, betrayed the depth of the attachment to him, which her maidenly reserve had hitherto concealed.

It was in vain that I assured her that Percy had not seen, or even heard from Lord Elmsdale, since the altercation at the Exhibition; his absence, which I could not satisfactorily explain, confirmed her worst apprehensions, and produced a violent attack of nerves. Mrs. Chatterton, too, when dinner was served, and Percy

did not appear, became exceedingly alarmed, and the repast was removed untouched. I told her the waiter's suspicions relative to Percy's having been arrested: the quarrel with Lord Elmsdale she had not heard of, for poor Margaret, fearful of revealing the deep interest she felt on the subject, had not named it to her.

"What! has he again got into debt?" asked Mrs. Chatterton, her countenance betraying her dissatisfaction at the notion.

I told her my opinion relative to the bill he had accepted for Lord Elmsdale; but the worthy woman could not bring herself to credit that such baseness could be practised by a nobleman or gentleman.

"What! leave another to suffer for a debt which he never incurred?" said she. "Can there be such a dishonourable man?"

While she was speaking on this subject, a letter was brought to me from Percy Mortimer, which fully proved the truth of my suspicions. He wrote from a sponging-house in Chancery-lane, belonging to no less a personage than the identical Mr. Benjamin Eliason, whom I had formerly seen in the chamber of Percy Mortimer, when my too good-natured friend had saved Lord Elmsdale from a prison, by accept-

ing the very bill for the amount of which he himself was now arrested.

"Go to the poor young man immediately, my dear Richard," said Mrs. Chatterton; "but stay,—I forgot that it is no use going unless you take the means of liberating him. Give me my spectacles and cheque-book. How much did you say it was?"

"Four hundred and seventy pounds was the original sum, if I remember rightly," said I.

"Well, then, I will draw for five hundred and fifty," said Mrs. Chatterton; "for probably there will be additional expenses to pay."

CHAPTER XI.

Furnished with the cheque for five hundred and fifty pounds, I set off for Chancery-lane, and having arrived at a shabby house, remarkable for its uncleanliness, even in a neighbourhood where every house looks dingy and dirty, I desired to be shown to Mr. Percy Mortimer's apartment. A tawdrily dressed woman, with slip-shod shoes, led me up a flight of stairs, that evidently had not come in contact with aught used for cleaning, during many a long day, and the accumulation of dirt testified to the numerous persons in the habit of using them, as well as to the extent of their perambulations in the neighbouring filthy streets.

"Please to hopen the door, Mr. Eliason, there be a gemman here as wants to see Mr. Pursy," said the woman; on which Mr. Ben-

jamin Eliason came forth from a small room adjoining that at which she had knocked, breathing not of Araby the blest, but of bad tobacco. Eying me with a scrutinizing glance, and drawing a key from his pocket, he applied it to the lock, and in another moment I found myself standing by my friend Percy Mortimer, who rose, and rushed to meet me.

A gaudy paper, bearing several stains of wine, and caricatures drawn in pen and ink, covered the walls of the chamber. A glass, the frame of which was larger than the mirror it bordered, and which said frame was covered with a very soiled yellow muslin, ornamented the chimney piece; on which were placed sundry delf images and vases of grotesque shapes, not a single one of which had escaped unbroken. Window curtains of crimson moreen trimmed with yellow fringe, were suspended from brass poles, terminated by the thyrsis of Bacchus; these same curtains had shared with the paper the libations of wine offered up probably to the jolly god, whose attribute adorned the brass poles. The chairs and sofa were so ricketty, as to create alarm in the minds of those compelled to use them, and partook the wine stains so liberally showered on the paper

and curtains. The carpet had several rents, and its colours were begrimed with dirt, while the table, covered with a worsted cloth that had once been crimson bordered with a yellow lace, bore innumerable marks of glasses of all sizes, imbedded in a stratum of filth, the accumulation of many months. An odour of tobacco, guiltless of ever having seen the Havannah, impregnated the room, and disputed with an overcoming smell of various spirituous liquors.

Two bottles of wine, untasted, a plate with some dirty looking biscuits, and another containing half a dozen of half-decayed oranges, with a few sheets of bad letter paper, a broken inkstand, and steel pen, graced the table. Never did I behold my poor friend Percy Mortimer so wholly subdued, as when he wrung my hand.

"You see," exclaimed he, "how infamously Lord Elmsdale has behaved to me!"

"Vy, lor bless you, sir!" interrupted Mr. Benjamin Eliason, "I'd have laid five pounds,—ay, that I would, and more too,—that he'd have let you into this here scrape, as soon as ever I heard that he'd got into parliament. It's the way with all them there young chaps; and

you're not the first, by no means, as has suffered for their doings."

"You remember, Richard, how he pledged his honour," said Percy.

"His honour!" repeated Mr. Ben. Eliason contemptuously: "Vy, there's not a pawnbroker in all London would take that there pledge for a penny piece. Ven I heard him say it I laughed downright, for I knowed how he had sarved other friends afore you, sir. But you ha'nt dined Mr. Pursy; wouldn't you like to have something? I can have a tender rump-steak, or a lamb-chop sent up to you in a jiffy."

"No, no—thank you Mr. Eliason, I have no appetite,—I really could not eat," replied Percy.

"But your friend, Mr. Pursy, may be he'd like to dine, for perhaps he was disturbed when he was sitting down to dinner?"

"No, thank you, I've dined," replied I.

"Vell then, if as how you've dined already, I suppose you'll not hobject to my sarving up a bottle of champagne well hiced? 'twill do Mr. Pursy good, and keep hup his spirits."

"No,—no champagne," said Percy impatiently.

"Vell, if you prefers claret its all the same to me: I never forces no gemman to drink any thing he does not like. I've ad some of the most tiptop young noblemen and gemmen in Lonnon in this same room, which I always resarves for genteel company; and not von of 'em can say as how Benjamin Eliason hever forced him to drink against his hinclination. No! what I say is fair enough. Hevery gemman, says I, is expected to call for something has a compliment to the house; he may drink it hor not, jist as he pleases."

"But you have already sent up sherry and madeira, which, though I have not touched, I am willing to pay for," replied Percy Mortimer.

"Vell, and if I have, vy, that was above three hours ago, and has both them there bottles have got hot and stale, they are of no use whatsomenever to nobody," answered Mr. Benjamin Eliason. "It's usual for gemmen has hoccupies the best room, which this here is, to call for something every hour or so, for the good of the house. And if it was not for this custom, how could I let gemmen stay here snug and comfortable, enjoying themselves hour after hour, while my men are running round the town with letters to their friends? And a

good profit my men make of it; for while I can only sell a few bottles of wine at little more than folk pay at the fashionable hotels at the west hend, my chaps can fill their pockets with money.—'Say I'm gone out of town, and my servants don't know where,' says one of the friends a poor gentleman has sent to, and he slips my man a sovereign.—'Tell him I'm in bed with a brain-fever, and the doctors von't let me hopen no letters,' says a third, tipping him a bit of gold; and 'Take back the letter, and say I'm gone to the Continent,' says a fourth. Mayhap some one or two friends, more courageous than the others, writes an answer, saying, 'How very sorry they are, that they cannot be of no use on the present hoccasion, as they are tied down by a solemn promise not to lend money, nor go security for no man.'—Another gemman writes that 'his vife won't let him,' though it be well known his vife, poor lady, never had power to prevent him doing anything he pleased'; and others say, p'raps more truly, that they are themselves so pressed for money, that they can't help him, though they'd do any thing else in the world to sarve him. I've often found sich letters half torn on this table or on the carpet, when the poor gemman has been

removed to prison. Hin short, sir, there's no hend to the hexcuses that gemmen make their friends when they most want 'em; vich makes me think, sir, that no von really has friends, hexcept those has is sure never to have the least hoccasion in life for their services. I've seen gemmen turn white and red in the face when my men has come back with such lies; and I've thought as how it was a terrible trial to 'em too; but when I've heard some of 'em say "how unlucky! if so, or so, had been in town, *he* would have immediately come to me;" when I knowed all the time, that this same chap the poor gemman had such trust in, had given a handful of silver to my man to say he was gone from Lunnon, when he was giving a grand dinner at home all the while, I have pitied the poor gemman who was so deceived."

"What is to be done, Richard?" asked Percy Mortimer. "I see no use in remaining here incurring heavy expense, and think it better to go at once to prison."

"I have here the means," replied, I "of extricating you. Mrs. Chatterton, the moment she heard of your difficulty, gave me money to settle it."

"Excellent woman! but what must she think of me?"

"She knows, dear Richard, that this is no recent folly; she pities you for the severe lesson you have received; and pardons the imprudence into which your good-nature and inexperience hurried you; while she despises the unworthy man for whom you have placed yourself in this painful position."

"Amiable and admirable as she is, and after all that she has already done for me, how can I thus trespass on her generosity? I really am overpowered by the deep sense I entertain of her kindness."

"Mr. Eliason, will you be so obliging as to let me know the amount of your claim on my friend?" asked I.

"Vy, let me see, sir,—the hamount with hexpenses and hall, comes to five hundred and heleven pounds, nine shillings and sixpence. Then there's the little hexpenses for the coach, the hire of this room, the vine, and other matters. But, if you please, sir, my vife, who hunderstands this business, will make hout the bill." And so saying, he went to the top of the stairs, taking care, however, to lock the

door on the outside, and called out to her to make up the bill.

In a few minutes he returned, bringing a soiled half sheet of foolscap paper, of the contents of which the following is a faithful transcript:—

	£	s.	d.
To a Hackney Coach,	0	8	6
To Happartment	2	2	0
To 1 bottle of Sherry	0	8	6
To do. Madeira	0	10	6
To Biscuits	0	2	6
To Horanges	0	3	0
To Letter-paper	0	2	6
To Sealing-wax	0	2	0
To Wax Candles	0	5	0
To Man for taking letter	0	10	6
	£4	15	0

Having discharged all expenses, and made, not without the suggestion of Mr. Benjamin Eliason, a present of two pounds to his wife, which, as he assured me, "was always done by every gemman has hoccupied the best room;" and rewarded his own politeness by a five-pound note, which he told us, was the least sum he was in the habit of receiving on similar occasions, we gladly quitted Chancery-lane, and left its dingy precincts as hastily as possible.

"We must first call at the coffee-house, to inquire if any answer has been sent from Lord

Elmsdale," said Percy Mortimer. So we turned our steps thither, and found the following note:—

"Lord Elmsdale, though not acknowledging any right on the part of Mr. Mortimer to demand an explanation from him, will have no objection to give the meeting required, provided Mr. Mortimer can find any gentleman (the word underlined) with whom his friend Lord Asherwood can arrange time and place for it."

I saw Percy's face become crimson as he perused this letter, which he was in the act of putting into his pocket, when I urged him to let me see it. He resisted my entreaties for some time, but at length gave me the note, observing, "that such insolence was beneath my notice."

"It is a mere excuse to refuse me satisfaction," continued Percy; "but I will find a mode of defeating it."

I felt my cheeks glow with anger; and had I, at the moment, encountered Lord Elmsdale, I do not think I could have resisted inflicting on him the manual chastisement his insolence so well merited; not that the denial of my right to be considered a gentleman, according to his notion of the character, wounded me; but that having insulted my sister, he was so unmanly

as to seek a pretext for not meeting her defender.

While we were concerting on what had best be done, Percy Mortimer saw a college friend of his, Lord Mordaunt, pass the window; and rushing into the street, he soon returned, bringing with him that young nobleman, to whom he presented me. He related the whole affair, arrest and all, to Lord Mordaunt, who immediately offered to be his friend on this occasion, and evinced the kindest interest in Percy.

"Leave this business in my hands," said he, "and either come to me at Mordaunt-house, or let me have your address, that I may be able to communicate with you."

We returned to Mrs. Chatterton's, where the warmest reception awaited us; for that worthy woman, anxious to lessen the sense of obligation under which the grateful heart of Percy Mortimer was obviously oppressed, evinced an increased sentiment of affection towards him. The altered looks of my sister Margaret, whose face, from an extreme paleness, blushed a rosy red as Percy entered the room where she was seated with Mrs. Chatterton, escaped not the eager glances of her lover, for that such he was, had for some time become evident to all. Yet,

as no avowal of his passion had passed his lips, and that his manner to Margaret was as respectful and reserved as possible, neither Mrs. Chatterton nor myself had thought it right to speak to him on the subject. When retiring for the night, my sister, as was her custom, shook hands with Percy Mortimer: he started at finding that her hand was burning.

"Good heavens! Mar—that is, Miss Wallingford—you are ill," exclaimed he.

"Only a slight cold," said Margaret, "I shall be better to-morrow."

"What did he say?" demanded Mrs. Chatterton.

"Miss Wallingford is ill—very ill," replied Percy.

"You are right, my young friend, she is in a high state of fever; and, now I think of it, she has looked very ill ever since she returned from her walk with you. Why, it was only a minute before you returned, Richard, that she was as pale as a ghost, and the instant she saw you she became as red as a rose."

"I shall be better, indeed I shall be better, after a good night's rest," said Margaret, who, giving her arm to Mrs. Chatterton, ascended to her chamber.

"You know not, Richard, you cannot know," said Percy, "how passionately, how fondly I love your sister. Were I possessed of millions they should be placed at her feet; but, poor and dependant, how can I hope that she, you, or Mrs. Chatterton, would listen to my vows with patience, much less sanction them? Ah, Richard! were I the rich person I was brought up to think I should be, with what pride and pleasure would I sue for Margaret's hand; but now——yes, I know it is folly, worse than folly, to think of asking her to become mine."

"If I know aught of Mrs. Chatterton's heart, my dear Percy," replied I, "she would not disapprove your attachment to Margaret, or offer any opposition to its being rewarded by her hand; and as to my sister, I am much deceived if she does not warmly reciprocate your affection, proofs of which I have often noticed, when she, poor dear girl, was little aware of the discovery I had made. What my feelings towards you, my dear Percy, are, you can more easily imagine than I can express; for I have never ceased to remember the kindness and delicacy with which you forgot, and tried to make me also forget, the difference between our births and fortunes, when your generous father took

me from comparative poverty, to share the advantages of the liberal education he was bestowing on you, his only son. Though no longer possessed of the fortune you once anticipated, I still think that had my sister thousands for her portion, a marriage with you would be the highest honour she could attain,—so you may judge the happiness it gives me to hear what you have just told me. I will, if you desire it, open the subject to Mrs. Chatterton."

"At what a moment does the delightful intelligence, that your beautiful sister is not indifferent to my affection, reach me. Should I fall, you will tell her how fondly, how fervently I loved her; and how long my poverty has prevented me from making known to her the sentiments of my heart. I cannot doubt, now that Lord Mordaunt has undertaken the arrangement of my quarrel, that Lord Elmsdale must meet me; and though I highly disapprove duelling, yet as society is at present constituted, I have not moral courage enough to decline seeking satisfaction for the insults I have received. How many grave reflections,—ay, and tender ones too, my dear Richard, press on my mind at this moment, when my reason so strongly pleads against the course that worldly

opinion has urged me to adopt. I must retire, and pray to the Almighty for pardon for thus daring to disobey *His* precept."

At an early hour next morning, Percy received a letter from Lord Mordaunt, informing him that he had seen Lord Asherwood and demanded a meeting between Lord Elmsdale and him, which had been immediately assented to; "but previously to its taking place," continued Lord Mordaunt, "I told Asherwood that all pecuniary transactions between Lord Elmsdale and you, must be finally settled. This is the usual course in such matters, and you must not depart from it."

In two hours after, a second letter from Lord Mordaunt reached Percy, in which he said that Lord Elmsdale not being able to repay the money due to Percy Mortimer, had consented to make an apology, which he hoped would be satisfactory to Mortimer's feelings; in which, having disclaimed all intention of offering any offence to my friend, or to the lady in whose society he had met him at the Exhibition, he expressed his regret that any thing on his part should have justified the supposition of his entertaining such an intention.

"Is it not abominable," said Percy Morti-

mer, handing the letter to me, "that a man in so elevated a sphere as that to which Lord Elmsdale belongs, should be so wanting in principle and feeling as to act in this manner? he is really a disgrace to his rank."

"I fear there are but too many who are so," replied I; "men who accept obligations when it suits their convenience, and who, forgetful of them, repay those who have conferred them with ingratitude, and insolence."

"That there are persons so base I cannot deny," observed Percy, "but does not the conduct of Lord Mordaunt redeem many such. Nor is he, believe me, a solitary example; for at college, I have known many young noblemen who resemble him, while those few who pursue the same course as Lords Elmsdale and Asherwood, are happily few in number. If I have been the dupe of such men, the fault was mine. Anxious to place myself on an equality with young men of rank, I administered to the wants of those whose extravagance had placed them in difficulties, and foolishly imagined that by conferring obligations on them, I made them my friends. I have discovered my mistake too late it is true to profit by it, but I am not ashamed to avow my error."

Lord Mordaunt called on Percy Mortimer the next day, and after inquiring into his prospects with all the kindness of a friend, informed him that he had a proposal to make, of which he thought his acceptance would he highly advantageous. "My father," continued he, "has just been appointed ambassador to Vienna, and requires a private secretary. He will, at my recommendation, immediately name you: the pay, though not large, will enable you to live like a gentleman; you will be lodged at the embassy, and have a seat at his table. If you require a few hundreds, permit me to be your banker; for be assured, I cannot have a greater pleasure than in being of use to you. If, as I anticipate, you discharge your duty in a manner to satisfy my father, you need entertain no apprehensions for your future career; for he has interest enough, and the inclination will not I am sure be wanting, to push you forward in the diplomatic line. What say you, my dear Mortimer—shall I immediately name it to him?"

When Mrs. Chatterton was informed of Lord Mordaunt's friendly offer, she instantly told Percy that it had long been her intention to render him independent. "Six hundred a year shall be settled on you forthwith," said she,

"with a considerable increase hereafter; so you are at liberty to accept or decline the proposal of Lord Mordaunt, as you judge best."

Margaret, who was present at the conversation, turned as pale as a lily; and having vainly tried to suppress or conceal her agitation, fell fainting on the sofa on which she was seated.

No longer master of his feelings, Percy Mortimer betrayed his long attachment by the fondest epithets addressed to Margaret, who, on opening her eyes, discovered him kneeling at her feet, and chafing her cold hands in his.

A scene of great tenderness followed her return to animation. Percy poured forth the long concealed secret of his heart, and she listened to the avowal with a pleasure that left him little doubt of her participation in the sentiments he avowed.

Mrs. Chatterton declared, that as the young people were so much attached to each other, it would be a pity to separate them; and as she could not resign the society of Margaret, Percy must give up the appointment offered him by Lord Mordaunt, and reside with her, and become a country gentleman.

While preparations were making for the

nuptials, the estate of Oak Park, the residence of the late Mr. Mortimer, was brought to the hammer, and Mrs. Chatterton became the purchaser.

Lord Mordaunt, who was a frequent visitor, was pleased to form so good an opinion of me, that the appointment offered to Percy, was, at his request, conferred on me, and shortly after my sister's marriage I accompanied the Marquess of Montrevor to Vienna.

Before my departure, which my good and kind friend, Mrs. Chatterton, would gladly have prevented, she settled on me one thousand pounds a year, which enabled me to hold the position which I had attained, with that independence which is so advantageous in all stations. My dislike to an idle life was the true and only plea I could urge for leaving my benefactress; and as I left her with those who I well knew would do all that could be effected for her comfort and happiness, I had the less compunction in resisting her entreaties to remain with her. I had the good fortune to conciliate the esteem and regard of the Marquess of Montrevor, and after spending three years beneath the same roof with him and his family,

had the happiness to win the affection of the Lady Mary Mordaunt, whose hand was bestowed on me, soon after which, through his lordship's interest, I obtained the appointment of minister to Turin.

The nephew of Mrs. Chatterton, who became acquainted with the Marquess of Montrevor and his family, through my alliance with them, has married the sister of my wife, and is now a distinguished member of the House of Commons.

Mrs. Chatterton is at present in her eightieth year, but still cheerful and healthy; she resides at Oak Park; and Percy Mortimer and my sister, with a fine boy and girl, of which they are the proud and happy parents, add to, if they do not form the happiness of her life.

My relations have been so prosperous, that my brothers have married into wealthy and respectable families, and are now esteemed among the gentry of the county; while my father and mother, who have converted the old farm-house into a neat cottage *orné*, are frequent and welcome visitors at Oak Park.

Lady Mary and I passed the last Christmas with Mrs. Chatterton; where a large family

party, including her nephew and his wife, with Lord Mordaunt, were assembled; and a merrier group could not have been found.

Lord Elmsdale, after pursuing a career of folly and extravagance, ended his days a short time ago by the pistol of a husband whose wife he had defamed, and who had refused to accept the apology which the pusillanimity of the defamer had induced him to proffer.

Lord Asherwood still may be seen at the clubs, where his dull and thrice-told tales render his conversation irksome to all who come in contact with him; and where he not unfrequently vents his spleen on the blindness of Fortune, for having, in one of her unaccountable freaks, elevated into another sphere from that in which he was born, the *parvenu* Richard Wallingford.

VERONICA OF CASTILLE.

There dwelt not in all Castille a fairer maiden than Veronica d'Alcantara. Left an orphan in her childhood, and the heiress of immense possessions, the guardianship of herself and fortune was confided to a distant relative, the Conde Ribiero. In his castle, in a remote province, were passed the first years of her girlhood; where, under the superintendence of a kind-hearted and devoted duenna, she attained all the accomplishments deemed necessary for a lady of ancient descent, who boasted of blue blood in her veins; and whose wealth surpassed that of every Hidalgo in the province. The Conde Ribiero had a nephew, a youth of wild and ungoverned passions, whose name had been more than once linked with crime; and

who no sooner saw the fair ward of his uncle, and heard of her broad lands, than he determined to appropriate both to himself. It was not that his heart was touched by the charms of the fair Veronica; for, truth to tell, all captivating as they were, they made but little impression on him. Her wealth was the attraction; though he rejoiced that her surpassing beauty would exempt him from the suspicion of having sought her solely from mercenary motives. His uncle, the Conde Ribiero, marked with satisfaction the preference accorded by Don Manuel de Mendoza to the fair Veronica. He looked on the alliance of his ward and heir as the means of enriching the impoverished fortunes of the latter, and upholding the fast-falling dignity of his ancient house; and in this agreeable prospect, forgot the vices of his nephew, reports of which had frequently reached him, coupled with irrefragable proofs of their truth.

Don Manuel was a constant guest in the secluded castle of the Côndc Ribiero, where no insidious art was left untried to win the affections of the young and lovely heiress. Flattery assailed the inexperienced girl in all the seductive tones of a man who had often,

and successfully, availed himself of this redoubtable weapon against the gentler sex; but sooth to say, though the flattery pleased her passing well, she loved not the flatterer. The vanity of Don Manuel became wounded, as he marked the unaffected indifference of her whom he had determined to wed. That he, the most favored of all the young men who distinguished themselves in the heartless course of gallantry at Madrid and had won the smiles of its proudest dames, should fail to captivate a mere girl, who had never left the solitude of her provincial abode, surprised and mortified him! His indifference towards Veronica soon began to assume a stronger, sterner sentiment—that, of positive dislike, as his wounded vanity writhed under the daily and evident symptoms of her distaste. Not all the dissimulation in which he was so well skilled, could at times conceal his hatred towards the fair and artless Veronica. Often did his more wary uncle reproach him, *not* for the sentiment, but for its unwise exposure, and prophesy that it would preclude the fulfilment of the schemes and wishes of both. Then would the wily Don Manuel, after such advice, smooth his brow,

dress his face in smiles, and court the heiress with all his practised arts; but she continued as insensible as before, her perfect indifference rendering her as unconscious of his real dislike, as regardless of his affected preference.

Veronica had now attained her seventeenth year, when a letter from the court, summoned the Conde Ribiero and his beautiful ward to visit Madrid. This summons, a compliance with which could not be evaded, filled the uncle and nephew with alarm. The beauty and wealth of Veronica could not fail, they felt convinced, to attract universal attention and admiration; and it was but too probable that the heart which had resisted all the arts of Don Manuel, would yield to one of the many suitors likely to try to win it in the dangerous focus of the courtly circle. They already saw, in anticipation, the prey they had so long deemed their own, become the property of another, but how to avert this impending evil they knew not. Various were the plans devised by this unworthy pair to detain Veronica from Madrid until she should consent to become the wife of Don Manuel; but the order for repairing thither was so peremptory, and the time granted

for obeying it so brief, that they despaired of finding any satisfactory excuse for non-compliance.

Veronica evinced such unequivocal symptoms of pleasure when informed that she was soon to exchange her gloomy abode, for the brilliant one of Madrid, that her guardian and his nephew saw that her desire to leave the Castle de Ribiero, would offer a strong obstacle to any plan they might attempt to frustrate it. Don Manuel, at the suggestion of his uncle, redoubled his attentions to Veronica; and she, elated at the prospect of her speedy emancipation from a dwelling endeared to her by no tie of affection, no recollection of happy days, in the artlessness of her nature, permitted a portion of the exhilaration she felt, to mingle in her converse with her guardian and his nephew; whose vanity led him to attribute her unusual complacency and gaiety, to a growing sentiment of kindness towards himself. But while the Conde Ribiero and Don Manuel retarded their departure to the utmost permitted limit, and reflected on every possible means of finding a pretext for detaining Veronica at the castle, chance offered one, the very evening previous to that fixed for their leaving the country, which they seized

with avidity. Veronica complained of illness, and in a few hours was pronounced, by the leech of the neighbouring village, to be suffering under the measles, a malady then raging in the neighbourhood. He asserted that the symptoms were so favorable; and the constitution of the patient so good, that her recovery could not fail to take place in two or three weeks, and pronounced that he would answer for her safety. Under these circumstances, the Conde Ribiero and his nephew determined to proceed to Madrid forthwith, rejoiced that the beautiful and wealthy heiress could not be exhibited at court for some time, and determined to use every effort to prevent her ever appearing there, until she was presented as the bride of Don Manuel de Mendoza.

Left to the care of her affectionate duenna and the skilful leech, and aided by an excellent constitution, Veronica soon recovered from her illness, and with all the buoyancy of mind peculiar to the young on leaving the sick chamber, sought the fresh and fragrant air with renovated feelings of delight. Mounted on her palfrey, and attended by an attached domestic, she would ride gaily forth, and for the first time mistress of her actions, extend her excursions

many miles beyond the walls of the umbrageous park, within which her duenna strictly enjoined her to limit them.

Of all duennas, Donna Olympia Albufera was the most tractable. She loved the Lady Veronica as though she had been her child, and never could resist her pleadings. A smile, or an affectionate entreaty from the fair young creature over whose childhood she had watched with almost maternal assiduity and tenderness, were generally found sufficient to silence the objections of Donna Olympia; but a caress or a tear were proved to be irresistible. The attendant who followed Veronica in her equestrian excursions, knew no will but hers; and relying on the indulgence of Donna Olympia, and the devotion of Huguez, the fair heiress now took advantage of her freedom from the presence of her guardian and his nephew, to extend her rides nearly seven miles into the surrounding country, the wild beauty of which surprised and delighted her. When she returned at a late hour from these protracted expeditions, Donna Olympia forgot to chide her for her long absence, in the pleasure the good woman experienced in seeing her partake her light repast with an unusually good appetite; and though

she urged, the next day, her request that her dear young lady would not stray so far from home, she welcomed her back with as much affection as if the entreaty had not been disregarded. These were happy days, and Veronica felt them to be so, though health and the enjoyment of air and exercise, constituted their chief pleasure; but to a young and pure mind these simple enjoyments furnish more gratification than the palled voluptuary can find in the most varied amusements.

Riding through a neighbouring forest one day, Veronica was surprised by encountering a knight, whose noble air and fine countenance, though seen only for a moment, made a deep impression on her. He drew up his charger, and uncovered his head while she passed, bowing low, and fixing on her face an impassioned glance from the most lustrous eyes that ever met her gaze. She returned the salute with dignified courtesy and maidenly reserve, and passed on, leaving the knight lost in admiration of her beauty. When she had proceeded some distance she demanded of Huguez, if he knew the knight they had met?

"Yes, lady," replied he, "it is no other than Don Alphonso de Pampluna; I recognized

him in a moment by his noble air and fine face, although I have not seen him since his childhood."

The Lady Veronica felt a complacency towards Huguez as he uttered these words, that she had never previously experienced; and she longed to question him still farther about the knight, but was deterred by a consciousness of already feeling an interest about him that had never before been excited in her breast. Encouraged by her first and only questions relative to the stranger, Huguez, on arriving at a narrow and somewhat abrupt defile, under pretence of thinking his lady's safety required a closer attendance, advanced nearer to her, and resumed the subject which had occupied both their thoughts since they had met the knight.

"Yes, lady, I knew it could be no other than Don Alphonso de Pampluna, the bravest warrior, and truest knight, in all Castille. Ay, I warrant me, he remembered old Huguez, though it is now seven years since I last saw him, for he smiled when I bent me to the pummel of my saddle in passing him. Ah! I should know that smile, and those white teeth of his, among a thousand, that I should,

There will be rejoicings in the castle, and in the village, I warrant me, at his return, for he is loved by all—so good, so generous, and so thoughtful of others. How many hearts will beat the quicker for seeing him! and how many tongues will bless his name!"

"I knew not," replied Veronica timidly, "that the Duke de Pampluna had any other son than the marquess, who is reported to be in such ill health."

"Don Alphonso is the duke's second son, lady," answered Huguez, not a little proud of the encouragement to speak given him by his noble mistress. "He has travelled much, madam, has been in various countries, and is now returned to help to soothe the last days of his brother, and to comfort the duke under the heavy calamity that threatens soon to deprive him of his elder son. The marquess is so good, that his death will cause universal regret, notwithstanding that his place will be nobly filled by Don Alphonso; and the brothers have been so fondly attached since their boyhood, that the accession of rank and wealth will be a poor consolation to Don Alphonso for the loss of such a brother. Ah, lady! the rich and great have their troubles as well as the poor

and lowly, and, Heaven knows, the Duke de Pamplûna has had his share!"

The Lady Veronica listened to the garrulous old servitor with deep interest, and he, gratified by it, made his horse amble closer to her Andalusian palfrey, still keeping a little in the rear to mark his respect.

"What have been the causes of the duke's troubles?" inquired the Lady Veronica.

"Bless me, lady! have you never heard the sad story?"

"Never, Huguez."

"That is strange," muttered the old man; "and perhaps the Conde de Ribiero would resent my communicating it."

"Do tell me, Huguez," said the Lady Veronica, in her sweetest accents—those accents which few could have resisted, and least of all the ancient domestic, whose love of gossiping was only equalled by his love and devotion to his youthful mistress.

"I am thinking, lady," said he, "that as you have never heard of the sad events to which I referred, it is probable that the conde, your guardian, did not wish you to be informed of them, and consequently might resent my telling you."

The curiosity of the Lady Veronica was still more excited by this hesitation of the old servitor to gratify it; and she so strongly urged Huguez to recite the tale, and promised so faithfully not to divulge it, that he at length related it to her.

"The Duke de Pampluna had been the friend as well as neighbour of the Conde de Ribiero, and their families frequently met. The duke was the happy father of two of the finest boys in all Spain, and he and his duchess loved their children so passionately, that their very existence seemed bound up in that of their sons. In his visits to the castle of the duke, the Conde Ribiero was frequently accompanied by his nephew, Don Manuel de Mendoza, who was about the same age as the eldest son of the duke, and the youths practised their lessons in horsemanship, tilting, fencing, and shooting, together. The marquess, then as fine a youth as ever mounted a courser or handled a lance, so far surpassed Don Manuel in all manly feats, that a strong sentiment of jealousy took possession of the heart of the latter, and every new achievement of his rival increased the baneful passion. When, as not unfrequently occurred, the marquess had unhorsed or dis-

armed his antagonist, Don Manuel would break out into the most violent fits of rage, and vow to be revenged. But all this passed with the attendants as proofs of the impetuosity of youth, and was never repeated beyond their own circle.

"The duke and duchess, with their sons, came to spend a few days at the Castle de Ribiero. As usual, the three youths, followed by their servitors, adjourned to the manege, and it was agreed that a tilting-match should take place between the marquess and Don Manuel. The superior address of the former soon rendered him victorious, and the rage of Don Manuel, at being defeated, became so ungovernable, that, observing Don Alphonso applaud his brother's prowess, he rushed on the child, then only in his twelfth year (Don Manuel being five years his senior), and struck him so violently with his lance, that he fell from his pony, the blood flowing from the wound inflicted on his arm by the point of the weapon. Maddened by seeing his brother struck down and bleeding, the marquess rushed on Don Manuel, who, shrinking on one side, avoided the blow aimed at him by his adversary, and pierced him in the side. The marquess

reeled in his saddle, and fell fainting into the arms of the attendants, who had rushed to separate the combatants, but, alas! arrived too late to prevent the misfortune which occurred.

"At this moment, the Duchess de Pampluna, accompanied by the maiden sister of the Conde de Ribiero, entered the manege, in order to see her sons enjoy their exercise, little dreaming of the fearful sight that awaited her; and beholding both her children apparently dead, and their garments stained with blood, she uttered a piercing shriek, and fell to the earth. Violent convulsions ensued, in which state she continued until the rupture of a blood-vessel in the head put an end to her sufferings and her life in the brief space of two hours. When the duke returned from a ride with the Conde de Ribiero, he found that the beloved partner of his life was no more, and that he was threatened with the loss of his first-born son, while the younger was not exempt from danger, the child being reduced to great weakness by the loss of blood."

The Lady Veronica shuddered, and felt her previous dislike to Don Manuel increased into a positive abhorrence as she listened to this sad tale.

"Ah! lady, that was a fearful day, and never since has any one of the house of Pampluna entered the castle of Ribiero. The very name is proscribed; nor can it be wondered at, when one reflects on the affliction that luckless visit entailed on the duke, for never since has the young marquess had an hour's health, which is to be attributed to the event of that day. The conde, your guardian, sent away his nephew, fearful that the retainers of the house of Pampluna would avenge on him the death of their beloved mistress, and the melancholy fate of their young lord, who, from the wound inflicted by Don Manuel, had his lungs so injured, that his life has been considered in daily danger. From being one of the finest youths ever seen, he dwindled nearly to a shadow; incapable of the least bodily exertion, he has dragged on an existence of pain and suffering, to be terminated—Heaven only knows how soon—by death; for it is said he is now reduced to nearly the last extremity."

"And the knight we lately met, how came he to leave his suffering brother, whilst he journied into distant lands?" demanded the Lady Veronica.

"Why, madam, no sooner had he reached

his sixteenth year, than remembering how the death of his lady mother, and the sufferings of his idolized brother, had been caused by Don Manuel, he determined to avenge them, or die in the attempt. He never forgot that it was in seeking to punish Don Manuel for his aggression on himself that the marquess received the wound that was reducing him to the grave; and the recollection made him burn to challenge him who had brought such misery on his family. The knowledge of this resolution, and the dread of losing the last prop of his noble house, determined the duke on sending Don Alphonso to travel; and he has only now returned, after an absence of seven years, to see his beloved brother before he dies."

Observing the effect produced on the Lady Veronica by his narrative, Huguez, dreading to indispose her towards Don Manuel, now endeavoured to palliate his crimes.

"He was then but a mere youth, lady, hardly out of childhood, and youth is ever wild and wilful. Don Manuel is now changed; I warrant me, he has doubtless often repented the rashness of his boyhood; and it is to save his feelings that the name of Pampluna is never mentioned in his presence. You will remember

your promise, lady, and not betray my having intrusted you with this secret?"

Whilst Veronica repeated her assurance of never revealing what he had told her, a shot was fired from a wood that bordered the road, which so startled her steed, that he plunged violently, and dashed back with fearful velocity through a bridle-path that led in the direction of the Castle of Ribiero. Fearful of urging his flight by pursuit, Huguez endeavoured to keep his lady in sight by crossing some fields; and in an attempt to clear a steep fence that intervened, was thrown from his horse, which escaped, and followed the course so lately taken by the terrified steed of the Lady Veronica. Though much bruised by his fall, the old man essayed to overtake the fugitives, but tried in vain; the sounds of the retreating feet of the horses were soon lost to his ear, and the most serious apprehensions for the safety of his young mistress obtained possession of his mind. Whilst he, panting with fatigue, advanced as quickly as his bruised leg and the infirmities of age would allow him, the Lady Veronica was borne rapidly along towards a deep ravine, through which gushed a mountain torrent, swollen by recent rain, and whose turbid waters

had overflown their banks, and dashed impetuously over the large rocks scattered on each side. She saw her danger without the power of averting it, for every attempt to turn the horse in a contrary direction was in vain; when at the moment the maddened steed was rushing down the ravine, a horseman cleared a high hedge on the left of the steep declivity, and throwing himself before him, seized the bridle, and arrested his further progress. The next moment, the Lady Veronica, half fainting with terror, was removed from her courser by her deliverer, who, one glance showed her, was no other than Don Alphonso de Pampluna.

This interview sealed the destinies of both; for though no word of love was spoken, each experienced that deep emotion which ever marks the commencement of true affection, and yielded to the new and delicious sentiment that pervaded their hearts, forgetful of the past and regardless of the future.

Whilst, seated on a bank, they conversed together, the horses tied to a tree, a peasant had stopped the steed of Huguez, and restored it to its owner; who now joined his lady and her deliverer, overjoyed to find her in safety.

As the Lady Veronica pointed out to the old servitor how near she had been to the foaming torrent, towards which her courser was rushing when Don Alphonso de Pampluna rescued her, such an expression of gratitude and tenderness shone in her beautiful countenance, that Don Alphonso felt he could have perilled his safety nay, his very life—a hundred times, to have reaped so rich a reward. He thanked her by looks eloquent as her own, spoke kindly to Huguez, referring with a deep sigh to his boyish remembrance of him, and having assisted the Lady Veronica to mount her courser, rode by her side until they reached the entrance to the park of Ribiero. Here he took leave, with a manner in which the most profound tenderness and deep respect struggled for mastery; and when, after advancing a considerable way, the fair Veronica, urged by an irresistible impulse, turned to look again at the gate where she had left him, she beheld him, as if transfixed to the spot, still gazing on her receding figure.

With what different feelings did she re-enter the Castle Ribiero, to those with which she had left it but a few hours before. She was a new being. Existence appeared to possess

charms which she had not previously suspected; her heart beat with emotions hitherto unknown; and the image of Don Alphonso was never for a moment absent from her thoughts. Donna Olympia Albufera remarked with pleasure the heightened colour and beaming eyes of her lovely charge; and talked of the marvellous effect of long rides in improving the complexion. But when, during the evening, she found the Lady Veronica abstracted, silent, and pensive, she averred that however such excursions might heighten the roses in her cheeks, they had not an advantageous influence on the spirits, for that she had never known her young lady so thoughtful before.

In her dreams that night, the Lady Veronica was again with Don Alphonso. Again she heard the music of his voice—again her eye sank beneath the tender glance of his: and she only awoke from her slumbers to the blissful conviction that in her ride that day they should again meet; for she felt this encounter to be certain, though neither of the lovers had alluded to it the day before. It was consequently with an impatience more nearly approaching to ill-humour than she had ever previously known, that she saw the rain descending in showers, as

she looked from her lattice. She watched the dense clouds with an anxiety as deep as it was new, and sighed as she marked that the gloomy horizon portended many hours of unceasing rain. Never had a day appeared so interminably long and irksome to her as this; she could settle to no occupation, though several were tried; and the unsuspicious Donna Olympia more than once observed that her young lady must be indisposed, so unusual was her pre-occupation and pensiveness.

The next day the sun shone brilliantly. Again she rode out, and on arriving at the park-gate, was more than half disposed to take the route where she had encountered Don Alphonso; but a sentiment of feminine delicacy forbade it, and she took, though not without an internal struggle, the contrary direction. She had proceeded but a short distance, when she met him who occupied all her thoughts, and who, even more impatient than herself for another interview, had been for some time watching for her from a neighbouring hill; whence, seeing the direction she had taken, he had galloped across some fields, and turned his horse so as to meet, instead of having the ap-

pearance of pursuing her. Their ride was a long one; and ere they parted, an avowal of the most passionate love was breathed to no unwilling ear by Don Alphonso; and replied to by downcast eyes, blushing cheeks, and a pearly tear that bedewed them.

Day after day they met, every interview rendering them still more fondly devoted to each other; until tidings came, that the Conde de Ribiero was soon to return to his castle, and with him Don Manuel de Mendoza.

The day this intelligence arrived, dreading that it might perhaps be the last when she could ride out attended only by Huguez, the Lady Veronica met her lover. His brow was overcast, and his cheek pale as marble as he pressed his lips to the delicate hand yielded to his grasp. He told her that his brother, the object in life next to her the most dear to him, was so much worse in health, that a few days, perhaps a few hours, might terminate his existence.

"This is most probably the last day that I can leave his couch of pain, until all is over," said Don Alphonso, and his eyes became suffused with tears, "but you will think of me, adorable Veronica, and while I soothe the bed

of death, your sweet voice will bid me not yield to despair, in losing the noblest brother and truest friend that man ever was blest with."

"Alas!" replied Veronica, "even had this heavy affliction been spared, we could not have continued to meet, for the Conde de Ribiero and his nephew have announced their approaching return, and I shall no longer be at liberty to ride out, except attended by them."

"These are indeed sad tidings," said Don Alphonso; and his cheeks glowed, and his eyes flashed. "Does the destroyer of my sainted mother, the slayer of my beloved brother, come hither to behold the completion of the misery his accursed hand has wrought on our house? Comes he here to triumph in our desolation, to witness the despair of my aged sire, and to see me consign to a premature grave, the brother who received his death wound in avenging the cowardly violence committed on me, whilst yet a child? His deeds call for vengeance,—be mine! oh, gracious Providence! thy instrument to smite him."

"Would'st thou expose a life so precious to thy parent, whose sole consolation thou soon must be—so necessary to"——"me," the Lady Veronica would have said, but modesty and

terror checked her utterance, and the tears she could not repress, flowed down her cheeks.

"To save my father a pang, and to preserve thee, idol of my soul, from sorrow, I would do much, but let the destroyer of my brother beware how he crosses my path, lest my long slumbering vengeance awake to annihilate him."

The lovers parted this day with a deeper sadness than either had ever felt at saying farewell, though never had they uttered the word without a regret known only to hearts as devoted as theirs, when parting even for a brief space. As they pursued the paths that led to their separate homes, until their figures were lost in the distance, often did they pause to look back at each other.

On reaching the castle of Ribiero, the Lady Veronica learned with dismay that a courier had arrived there, to announce the death of the conde, his master, (which event had occurred suddenly at an inn, on the route the previous night), and that the corpse of the defunct, attended by his nephew and domestics, would arrive the next day. This intelligence spread a general gloom over the castle, for the Conde de Ribiero, though a weak man, was a mild and generous master; whose greatest faults origi-

nated in an overweening affection for his worthless nephew, to whom he had bequeathed his fortune. Every one in the castle dreaded the change likely to be effected by the new possessor; for Don Manuel was equally disliked and feared. To the Lady Veronica, who had ever experienced gentle treatment, if not kindness from her late guardian, the news brought unaffected regret; but whilst she lamented the departed, she forgot not (and she accused herself of selfishness in remembering it at such a moment), that she was now released from all dependence on the will of another, and was free to bestow her hand where her heart was already given. Unconnected by even a remote tie of blood with the new Conde de Ribiero, there could no longer be any obstacle to her union with Don Alphonso, whenever he claimed her for his bride; and this thought soothed the sorrow she felt for the death of her guardian. She determined to wait in the castle until the obsequies of the deceased were over, and then to remove with Donna Olympia to the home of her fathers.

The next night, the funeral procession reached the castle, headed by Don Manuel, now Conde de Ribiero, who entered it rather as a trium-

phant conqueror, than as a mourner for the most indulgent of uncles. The undisguised satisfaction he evinced on taking possession of his newly acquired wealth, no less shocked than disgusted the inhabitants of the castle. But when, with indecent haste, within an hour after his arrival, he ordered the corpse of the late conde to be consigned to the tomb, all were filled with indignation.

The next morning, at an early hour, the new Conde de Ribiero was examining every cabinet, and ransacking every coffer of the deceased, and before noon, he had discharged all the servitors of his late uncle, whose age or infirmities rendered them unfit for active service. There were nought but tears, murmurings, and prophetic shakes of the head, to be seen among the dependents, as they were ordered to leave the roof that had so long sheltered them, and under which they had hoped to have closed their eyes. No will belonging to the dead could be found, or if found (which was shrewdly suspected), was ever produced, and even a scanty pittance to support the infirmities of age, was denied those who had spent their best days in the service of the late conde. Huguez was among the dis-

missed, but he was immediately engaged by the Lady Veronica, to form one of her retinue.

On the evening of the day after his arrival at the castle, the conde sought the chamber appropriated to the Lady Veronica, and approached to take her hand with the air of one who seemed to think he had a right to it. She withdrew it with an air of dignified reserve that displeased him, and he was at no pains to conceal his displeasure.

"You are cold and haughty, methinks," said he, "and receive me not as befits a betrothed bride to receive her future lord."

The undissembled surprise of the Lady Veronica on hearing this speech, seemed to increase his anger, and when she proudly told him that she never had, and never would consider him in any other light than that of a mere acquaintance, his rage knew no bounds. He swore that she should never leave the castle but as his wife, and at the termination of their stormy interview, absolutely locked her up as a prisoner in her chamber, and put the key in his pocket.

While this scene was passing at the Castle de Ribiero, Don Alphonso de Pampluna was

watching by the couch of pain of his beloved brother, and endeavouring to cheer the spirits of his aged sire. The first intelligence of the death of the Conde de Ribiero was brought to him by the faithful Huguez, who, informed by Donna Olympia that the Lady Veronica was incarcerated in her chamber, by the unworthy successor of the late conde, thought it right to make Don Alphonso acquainted with the state of affairs. The indignation of the lover knew no bounds when he heard of the treatment to which she was subjected; and he vowed that he would rescue her from the power of her unmanly persecutor, or perish in the attempt. He instantly determined to call on the conde to restore the Lady Veronica immediately to freedom, or to meet him in single combat forthwith.

This challenge was dispatched by a trusty hand, and its receipt threw the Conde de Ribiero into the most ungovernable rage. He hurried to the chamber of his fair prisoner, and demanded if she knew its writer. Her answer in the affirmative enraged him beyond measure; but when, after having reproached, and even threatened her with personal violence, she ac-

knowledged, with all the *fierté* of her race, that she loved the Marquess de Pampluna, and never would be the bride of any other, his fury became desperate, and he vowed to take deadly vengeance on her lover. He wrote, and fixed an hour and place for the combat. The spot selected was an opening in a forest, a few miles distant from the castle, a wild and unfrequented place, bounded on one side by a steep and nearly perpendicular rock, at the base of which flowed a deep river.

The Conde de Ribiero, as dastardly in spirit as violent in temper, having heard much of the prowess in arms of him who had challenged him to combat, dreaded the result of the encounter, and determined to try and take vengeance by a mode less doubtful than that afforded by an honourable combat. Among his retainers, there was one named Diego, of great physical force and reputed skill in arms; and him he decided on having recourse to in this dilemma. He promised a large reward to Diego, if, when Don Alphonso de Pampluna advanced to the place appointed for the combat, he would rush out from ambush and slay him before he had time to draw his sword to defend

himself; promising, that if Don Alphonso fell not by the arm of this mercenary assassin, he would himself sally forth from a concealment, whence he could await the result of the rencontre, and if required, assist in despatching his foe. The close of the evening was the hour agreed on for the meeting, and unsuspicious of treachery, Don Alphonso rode forth, unattended, to the appointed place. He had arrived within a short distance of it, when Diego rushed from the adjoining thicket, and attacked him with a fury and vigour which would have soon terminated the fight, had Don Alphonso been a less accomplished swordsman; but quickly recovering from the momentary surprise caused by the vile treachery practised on him, he not only defended himself from the thrusts of his powerful assailant, but aimed a blow at him that laid him, mortally wounded, at his feet.

The dastardly Conde de Ribiero witnessed with dismay, the defeat of his mercenary, and would have fled, but the neighing of his horse betrayed his place of concealment, and the indignant Don Alphonso, hurling defiance at him, braved him to the combat. His pusillanimity

afforded so easy a conquest to his opponent, that his anger changed to contempt, and he was on the point of abandoning the too unequal fight, when the charger of De Ribiero becoming unmanageable, his rider, who was as little skilled in equitation as in arms, suddenly checked him up so violently, that the animal, rearing, fell with him down the precipice. Shocked at this catastrophe, which was the work of a moment, Don Alphonso approached the edge of the stupendous abyss, and shuddered as he beheld the wretched De Ribiero and his steed dashed from rock to rock, their forms growing every instant smaller, until they were lost in the foaming torrent beneath. Another eye had also been a witness to this awful event; for Huguez, having met the horse of the mortally wounded mercenary returning to the castle, and suspecting some act of treachery from the known character of Diego, mounted the steed, and directing him towards the place whence he had come, reached it only a few minutes before the close of the eventful scene.

The wounded man was conveyed to th[illegible] castle, where, previous to his death, he con-

fessed the plot formed by his worthless master against the life of Don Alphonso.

The first act of the latter was to deliver the Lady Veronica from her prison, and to lead her to the castle of his sire, where she was warmly welcomed: and soon became the bride of her deliverer, the consolation of his father and brother, and the honoured mistress of his ancient house.

END OF VOL. I.

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